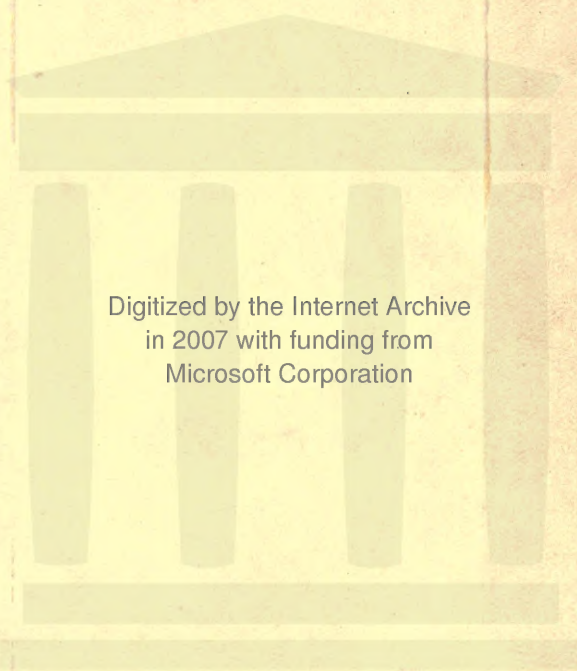


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SIR JASPER CAREW





"Stand where you are!"

SIR JASPER CAREW.

SIR JASPER CAREW

HIS LIFE AND EXPERIENCES

BY

CHARLES LEVER

AUTHOR OF "CHARLES O'MALLEY"

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS

THE BROADWAY, LUDGATE

NEW YORK: 416, BROOME STREET

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WOODFALL AND KINDER,
MILFORD LANE, STRAND, W.C.

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H. D. W.

BY

ONE WHO THINKS HIGHLY OF HIS HEART, AND HOPES MUCH FROM HIS HEAD

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NOTICE.

It has been constantly observed by writers of travels, that to gain credence for any of the strange incidents of their journeys, they have been compelled to omit many of the most eventful passages of their lives. "The gentlemen," and still more the ladies, "who live at home at ease," take, indeed, but little account of those adventures which are the daily lot of more precarious existences, and are too prone to set down as marvellous, or worse, events which have comparatively little remarkable for those whose fortunes have thrown them on the highways of the world.

I make this remark in part to deprecate some of the criticism which I have seen pronounced upon these Memoirs. It has been said—How could any man have met so many adventures? and my answer is simply—By change of place. Nothing more is required. The pawn on the chess-board has a life of a very uneventful character, simply because his progress is slow, methodical, and unchanging. Not so the knight, who, with all the errantry of his race, dashes here and there, encountering every rank and condition of men—continually in difficulties

himself, or the cause of them to others. What the knight is to the chess-board, the adventurer is to real life. The same wayward fortune and zig-zag course belongs to each, and each is sure to have his share in nearly every great event that occurs about him. But I also refer to this subject on another account. Tale writers are blamed for the introduction of incidents which have little bearing on the main story, or whose catastrophes are veiled in obscurity. But I would humbly ask, are not these exactly the very traits of real life? Is not every man's course chequered with incidents, and crossed by people who never affect his actual career? Do not things occur every week singular enough to demand a record, and yet, to all seeming, not in any way bearing upon our fortunes? While I need but appeal to universal experience to corroborate me when I say that life is little else than a long series of uncompleted adventures, I do not employ the strongest of all argument on this occasion, and declare that in writing my Memoirs I had no choice but to set down the whole or nothing, because I am aware that some sceptical folk would like to imagine *me* a shade, and *my story* a fiction!

I am quite conscious of some inaccuracies; for aught I know there may be many in these pages; but I wrote most of them in very old age, away from books, and still further away from the friends who might have afforded me their counsel and guidance. I wrote with difficulty and from memory—that is, from a memory in which a fact often faded while I transcribed it, and where it demanded all my efforts to call up the incidents,

without, at the same time, summoning a dozen others, irrelevant and unwarranted.

These same pages, with all their faults, have been a solace to many a dreary hour, when, alone and companionless, I have sat in the stillness of a home that no footsteps resound in, and by a hearth where none confronts me. They would be still richer in comfort if I thought they could cheer some heart lonely as my own, and make pain or sorrow forget something of its sting. I scarcely dare to hope for this, but I *wish* it heartily ! and if there be aught of presumption in the thought, pray set it down amongst the other errors and shortcomings of

JASPER CAREW.

PALAZZO GUIDOTTÉ, SENEGAGLIA,

Jan. 1855.



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SIR JASPER CAREW.

CHAPTER I.

SOME "NOTICES OF MY FATHER AND MOTHER."

It has sometimes occurred to me that the great suits of armour we see in museums, the huge helmets that come down like extinguishers on the penny candles of modern humanity, the enormous cuirasses and gigantic iron gloves, were neither more nor less than downright and deliberate cheats practised by the "Gents" of those days for the especial humbugging of us their remote posterity. It might, indeed, seem a strange and absurd thing that any people should take so much pains, and incur so much expense, just for the sake of mystifying generations then unborn. Still, I was led to this conclusion by observing and reflecting on a somewhat similar phenomenon in our own day; and indeed it was the only explanation I was ever able to come to, respecting those great mansions that we Irish gentlemen are so fond of rearing on our estates, "totally regardless of expense," and just as indifferent to all the circumstances of our fortune, and all the requirements of our station—the only real difference being, that our forefathers were satisfied with quizzing their descendants, whereas we, with a livelier appreciation of fun, prefer enjoying the joke in our own day.

Perhaps I am a little too sensitive on this point; but my reader will forgive any excess of irritability when I tell him that to this national ardour for brick and mortar—this passion for cutstone and stucco—it is, I owe, not only some of the mischances of my life, but also a share of what destiny has in store for those that are to come after me. We came over to Ireland with Cromwell; my ancestor, I believe, and I don't desire to hide the fact, was a favourite trumpeter of Old Noll.

He was a powerful, big-boned, slashing trooper, with a heavy hand on a sabre, and a fine, deep, bass voice in the conventicle; and if his Christian name was a little inconvenient for those in a hurry—he was called Bind-your-kings-in-chains-and-your-nobles-in-links-of-iron Carew—it was of the less consequence, as he was always where he ought to be, without calling. It was said, that in the eyes of his chief his moderation was highly esteemed, and that this virtue was never more conspicuous than in his choice of a recompense for his services; since, instead of selecting some fine, rich tract of Meath, or Queen's County, some fruitful spot on the Shannon or the Blackwater, with a most laudable and exemplary humility he pitched upon a dreary and desolate region in the County Wicklow—picturesque enough in point of scenery, but utterly barren and uncultivated. Here, at a short distance from the opening of the Vale of Arklow, he built a small house, contiguous to which, after a few years, was to be seen an outlandish kind of scaffolding—a composite architecture between a draw-well and a gallows; and which, after various conjectures about its use—some even suggesting that it was a new apparatus “to raise the Devil”—turned out to be the machinery for working a valuable lead mine which, by “pure accident,” my fortunate ancestor had just discovered there.

It was not only lead, but copper ore was found there; and at last silver; so that in the course of three generations, the trumpeter's descendants became amongst the very richest of the land; and when my father succeeded to the estate, he owned almost the entire country between Newrath Bridge and Arklow. There were seventeen townlands in our possession, and five mines in full work. In one of these, gold was found, and several fine crystals of topaz, and beryl—a few specimens of which are yet to be seen in the Irish Academy. It has been often remarked that men of ability rarely or never transmit their gifts to the generation succeeding them. Nature would seem to set her face against monopolies, and at least, so far as intellect is concerned, to be a genuine “Free-Trader.” There is another and very similar fact, however, which has not attracted so much notice. It is this: that not only the dispositions and tastes of successive generations change and alternate, but that their luck follows the same law, and that after a good run of fortune for maybe a century or two, there is certain to come a turn; and thus it is, that these ups and downs, which are only remarked in the lives of individuals, are occurring in the wider ocean of general humanity. The common incident that we so often

hear of, a man winning an enormous sum and losing every farthing of it, down to the very half-crown he began with, is just the type of many a family history—the only difference being, that the event which, in one case, occupied a night, in the other was spread over two, or maybe three hundred years.

When my father succeeded to the family property, Ireland was enjoying her very palmiest days of prosperity. The spirit of her nationality, without coming into actual collision with England, yet had begun to assume an attitude of proud hostility—a species of haughty defiance—the first effect of which was to develop and call forth all the native ardour and daring of a bold and generous people. It was in the celebrated year '82; and, doubtless, there are some yet living who can recall to memory the glorious enthusiasm of the "Volunteers." The character of the political excitement was eminently suited to the nature of the people. The themes were precisely those which lay fastest hold of enthusiastic temperaments. Liberty and Independence were in every mouth. From the glowing eloquence of the Parliament House—the burning words and heart-stirring sentences of Grattan and Ponsonby—they issued forth to mingle in all the exciting din of military display—the tramp of armed battalions, and the crash and glitter of mounted squadrons. To these succeeded those festive meetings, resounding with all the zeal of patriotic toasts—brilliant displays of those convivial accomplishments for which the Irish gentlemen of that day were so justly famed. There was something peculiarly splendid and imposing in the spectacle of the nation at that moment; but, like the grand groupings we witness upon the stage, all the gorgeousness of the display was only to intimate that the curtain was about to fall!

But to come back to personal matters. At the first election, which occurred after his accession to the property, my father was returned for Wicklow, by a large majority, in opposition to the Government candidate; and thus, at the age of twenty-two, entered upon life with all the glowing ardour of a young patriot—rich, well-looking, and sufficiently gifted to be flattered into the self-confidence of actual ability.

Parliamentary conflicts have undergone a change, just as great as those of actual warfare. In the times I speak of, tactical skill and subtlety would have availed but little, in comparison with their present success. The House was then a species of tournament, where he who would break his lance with the most valiant tilter, was always sure of an antagonist. The marshal-

ling of party, the muster of adherents, was not, as it now is, all-sufficient against the daring eloquence of a solitary opponent; and if, as is very probable, men were less under the guidance of great political theorems, they were assuredly not less earnest and devoted than we now see them. The contests of the House were carried beyond its walls, and political opponents became deadly enemies, ready to stake life at any moment in defence of their opinions. It was the school of the period; nor can it be better illustrated than by the dying farewell of a great statesman, whose last legacy to his son was in the words: "Be always ready with the pistol." This great maxim, and the maintenance of a princely style of living, were the two golden rules of the time. My father was a faithful disciple of the sect.

In the course of a two years' tour on the Continent, he signalized himself by various adventures, the fame of which has not yet faded from the memory of some survivors. The splendour of his retinue was the astonishment of foreign courts; and the journals of the time constantly chronicled the princely magnificence of his entertainments, and the costly extravagance of his household. Wagers were the fashionable pastime of the period; and to the absurd extent to which this passion was carried, are we in all probability now indebted for that character of eccentricity by which our countrymen are known over all Europe.

The most perilous exploits—the most reckless adventures—ordeals of personal courage, strength, endurance, and address, were invented as the subject of these wagers; and there was nothing too desperately hazardous, nor too absurdly ridiculous, as not to find a place in such contests. My father had run the gauntlet through all, and in every adventure was said to have acquitted himself with honour and distinction.

Of one only of these exploits do I intend to make mention here; the reason for the selection will soon be palpable to my reader. At the time I speak of, Paris possessed two circles totally distinct in the great world of society. One was that of the Court; the other rallied around the Duc d'Orleans. To this latter my father's youth, wealth, and expensive tastes predisposed him, and he soon became one of the most favoured guests of the Palais Royal. Scanty as are the materials which have reached us, there is yet abundant reason to believe that never, in the most abandoned days of the Regency, was there any greater degree of profligacy than then prevailed there. Every vice and debauchery of a corrupt age was triumphant

and even openly defended on the base and caluminous pretence, that the company was at least as moral as that of the "Petit Trianon." My father, I have said, was received into this set with peculiar honour. His handsome figure—his winning manners—an easy indisposition—and an ample fortune, were ready recommendations in his favour, and he speedily became the chosen associate of the Prince.

Amongst his papers are to be found the unerring proofs of what this friendship cost him. Continued losses at play had to be met by loans of money, at the most ruinous rates of interest; and my poor father's memoranda are filled with patriarchal names, that too surely attest the nature of such transactions. It would seem, however, that fortune at last took a turn—at least the more than commonly wasteful extravagance of his life at one period would imply that he was a winner. These gambling contests between the Duke and himself had latterly become like personal conflicts, wherein each staked skill, fortune, and address on the issue; duels, which involved passions just as deadly as any whose arbitrement was ever decided by sword or pistol! As luck favoured my father, the Duke's efforts to raise money were not less strenuous, and frequently as costly, as his own; while on more than one occasion the jewelled decorations of his rank—his very sword—were the pledges of the play-table. At last, so decidedly had been the run against him, that the Prince was forced to accept of loans from my father, to enable him to continue the contest. Even this alternative, however, availed nothing. Loss followed upon loss, till at length, one night, when fortune had seemed to have utterly forsaken him, the Prince suddenly rose from the table, and saying—"Wait a moment, I'll make one 'coup' more," disappeared from the room. When he returned, his altered looks almost startled my father. The colour had entirely deserted his cheeks; his very lips were bloodless; his eyes were streaked with red vessels; and when he tried to speak, his first words were inaudible. Pressing my father down again upon the seat from which he had arisen, he leaned over his shoulder, and whispered in a voice low and broken,—

"I have told you, Chevalier, that I would make one 'coup' more. This sealed note contains the stake I now propose to risk. You are at liberty to set any sum you please against it. I can only say, it is all that now remains to me of value in the world. One condition, however, I must stipulate for; it is this: If you win"—here he paused, and a convulsive shudder

rendered him for some seconds unable to continue—"if you win, that you leave France within three days, and that you do not open this paper till within an hour after your departure."

My father was not only disconcerted by the excessive agitation of his manner, but he was little pleased with a compact, the best issue of which would compel him to quit Paris and all its fascinations at a very hour's notice. He tried to persuade the Prince that there was no necessity for so heavy a venture; that he was perfectly ready to advance any sum his royal highness could name; that fortune, so persecuting as she seemed, should not be pushed further, at least for the present. In fact, he did everything which ingenuity could prompt to decline the wager; but the more eagerly he argued, the more resolute and determined became the Duke; till at last, excited by his losses, and irritated by an opposition to which he was but little accustomed, the Prince cut short the discussion by the insolent taunt, "that the Chevalier was probably right, and deemed it safer to retain what he had won, than risk it by another venture."

"Enough, sir; I am quite ready," replied my father, and rescated himself at the table.

"There's my stake, then," said the Prince, throwing a sealed envelope on the cloth.

"Your royal highness must correct me, if I am in error," said my father, "and make mine beneath what it ought to be." At the same moment he pushed all the gold before him—several thousand louis—into the middle of the table.

The Prince never spoke nor moved; and my father, after in vain waiting for some remark, said,—

"I perceive, sir, that I have miscalculated. These are all that I have about me;" and he drew from his pocket a mass of bank-notes of considerable amount. The Prince still maintained silence.

"If your royal highness will not vouchsafe to aid me, I must only trust to my unguided reason, and however conscious of the inferiority of the venture, I can but stake all that I possess. Yes, sir, such is my stake."

The Prince bowed formally and coldly, and pushed the cards towards my father. The fashionable game of the day was called Barocco, in which, after certain combinations, the hand to whom fell the Queen of Spades became the winner. So evenly had gone the fortune of the game, that all now depended on this card. My father was the dealer, and turned up each card slowly, and with a hand in which not the slightest tremor could be detected. The Prince, habitually the very ideal of a

gambler's cold impassiveness, was agitated beyond all his efforts to control, and sat with his eyes riveted on the game; and when the fatal card fell at length from my father's hand, his arms dropped powerless at either side of him, and with a low groan he sank fainting on the floor.

He was quickly removed by his attendants, and my father never saw him after! All his efforts to obtain an audience were in vain; and when his entreaties became more urgent, he was given significantly to understand that the Prince was personally indisposed to receive him. Another and stronger hint was also supplied, in the shape of a letter from the Minister of Police, inclosing my father's passport, and requiring his departure, by way of Calais, within a given time.

Whatever share curiosity, as to the contents of the paper, might have had in my father's first thoughts, a sense of offended dignity for the manner of his treatment speedily mastered; and as he journeyed along towards the coast, his mind was solely occupied with one impression. To be suddenly excluded from the society in which he had so long mixed, and banished from the country where he had lived with such distinction, were indeed deep personal affronts, and not without severe reflection on his conduct and character.

His impatience to quit a land where he had been so grossly outraged, grew greater with every mile he travelled; and although the snow lay heavily on the road, he passed on regardless of everything but his insulted honour. It was midnight when he reached Calais. The packet which had sailed in the afternoon, had just re-entered the port, driven back by a hurricane, that had almost wrecked her. The passengers, overcome with terror, fatigue and exhaustion, were crowding into the hotel, at the very moment of my father's arrival. The gale increased in violence at every instant, and the noise of the sea breaking over the old piles of the harbour, was now heard like thunder. Indifferent to such warning, my father sent for the captain, and asked him what sum would induce him to put to sea. A positive refusal to accept of any sum was the first reply, but by dint of persuasion, persistence, and the temptation of a large reward, he at last induced him to comply.

To my father's extreme surprise, he learned that two ladies who had just arrived at the hotel, were no less resolutely bent on departure, and, in defiance of the gale, which was now terrific, sent to beg that they might be permitted to take their passage in the vessel. To the landlord, who conveyed this

request, my father strongly represented the danger of such an undertaking ; that nothing short of an extreme necessity would have induced him to embark in such a hurricane ; that the captain, who had undertaken the voyage at his especial entreaty, might, most naturally, object to the responsibility. In a word, he pleaded everything against this request, but was met by the steady, unvarying reply, " That their necessity was not less urgent than his own, and that nothing less than the impossibility should prevent their departure."

" Be it so, then," said my father, whose mind was too much occupied with his own cares to bestow much attention on strangers. Indeed, so little of either interest or curiosity did his fellow travellers excite in him, that although he assisted them to ascend the ship's side, he made no effort to see their faces ; nor did he address to them a single word. They who cross the narrow strait now-a-days, with all the speed of a modern mail-steamer, can scarcely credit how much of actual danger the passage once involved. The communication with the Continent was frequently suspended for several days together ; and it was no unusual occurrence to hear of three or even four mails being due from France. So great was the storm on the occasion I refer to, that it was full two hours before the vessel could get clear of the port ; and even then, with a mainsail closely reefed, and a mere fragment of a foresail, the utmost she could do was to keep the sea. An old and worthless craft, she was ill-suited to such a service ; and now, at each stroke of the waves, some bulwark would be washed away, some spar broken, or part of the rigging torn in shreds. The frail timbers creaked and groaned with the working, and already, from the strain, leaks had burst open in many places, and half the crew were at the pumps. My father, who kept the deck without quitting it, saw that the danger was great, and not improbably, now condemned his own rashness when it was too late. Too proud, however, to confess his shame, he walked hurriedly up and down the poop, only stopping to hold on at those moments, when some tremendous lurch almost laid the craft under. In one of these it was, that he chanced to look down through the cabin grating, and there beheld an old lady, at prayer, on her knees ; her hands held a crucifix before her, and her upturned eyes were full of deep devotion. The lamp which swung to and fro above her head threw a passing light upon her features, and showed that she must once have been strikingly handsome, while even yet the traces were those that bespoke birth and condition. My father in vain sought

for her companion, and while he bent down over the grating to look, the captain came up to his side.

"The poor Duchess is terribly frightened," said he, with an attempt at a smile, which only half succeeded.

"How do you call her?" asked my father.

"La Duchesse de Sargance, a celebrated court beauty some forty years ago. She has been always attached to the Duchess of Orleans; or some say, to the Duke. At least, she enjoys the repute of knowing all his secret intrigues and adventures."

"The Duke!" said my father, musing: and suddenly calling to mind his pledge, he drew nigh to the binnacle lamp, and opening his letter, bent down to read it. A small gold locket fell into his hand, unclasping which, he beheld the portrait of a beautiful girl of eighteen or nineteen. She was represented in the act of binding up her hair; and in the features, the colouring, and the attitude, she seemed the very ideal of a Grecian statue. In the corner of the paper was written the words, "Ma Fille," "Philippe d'Orleans."

"Is this possible? can this be real?" cried my father, whose quick intelligence at once seemed to divine all. The next instant he was at the door of the cabin, knocking impatiently to get in.

"Do you know this, madam?" cried he, holding out the miniature towards the Duchess. "Can you tell me aught of this?"

"Is the danger over—are we safe?" was her exclamation, as she arose from her knees.

"The wind is abating, madam—the worst is over; and now to my question."

"She is yours, sir," said the Duchess, with a deep obeisance. "His royal highness's orders were, not to leave her till she reached England. Heaven grant that we are to see that hour. This is Mademoiselle de Courtois," continued she, as at the same instant the young lady entered the cabin.

The graceful ease and unaffected demeanour with which she received my father at once convinced him that she at least knew nothing of the terrible compact in which she was involved. Habituated as he was to all the fascinations of beauty, and all the blandishments of manner, there was something to him irresistibly charming in the artless tone with which she spoke of her voyage, and all the pleasure she anticipated from a tour through England.

"You see, sir," said the Duchess, when they were once more alone together, "Mademoiselle Josephine is a stranger to the

position in which she stands. None could have undertaken the task of breaking it to her. Let us trust that she is never to know it."

"How so, madam? Do you mean that I am to relinquish my right?" cried my father.

"Nothing could persuade me that you would insist upon it, sir."

"You are wrong, then, madam," said he, sternly. "To the letter I will maintain it. Mademoiselle de Courtois is mine; and within twenty-four hours the law shall confirm my title, for I will make her my wife."

I have heard that however honourable my father's intentions thus proclaimed themselves, the Duchess only could see a very lamentable *mésalliance* in such a union; nor did she altogether disguise from my father that his royal highness was very likely to take the same view of the matter. Mademoiselle's mother was of the best blood of France, and illegitimacy signified little if Royalty but bore its share of the shame. Fortunately the young lady's scruples were more easily disposed of: perhaps my father understood better how to deal with them; at all events, one thing is certain, Madame de Sargance left Dover for Calais on the same day that my father and his young bride started for London—perhaps it might be exaggeration to say the happiest, but it is no extravagance to call them—as handsome a pair as ever journeyed the same road on the same errand. I have told some things in this episode, which, perhaps, second thoughts would expunge, and I have omitted others that as probably the reader might naturally have looked for. But the truth is, the narrative has not been without its difficulties. I have had to speak of a tone of manners and habits now happily bygone, of which I dare not mark my reprehension with all the freedom I could wish, since one of the chief actors was my father—its victim, my mother.



CHAPTER II

THE ILLUSTRATION OF AN ADAGE.

"MARRY in haste," says the adage, and we all know what occupation leisure will bring with it; unhappily my father was not to prove the exception to the maxim. It was not that his wife was wanting in any quality which can render married life happy; she was, on the contrary, most rarely gifted with them all. She was young, beautiful, endowed with excellent health, and the very best of tempers. The charm of her manner won every class with whom she came into contact. But—alas, that there should be a but—she had been brought up in habits of the most expensive kind. Living in royal palaces, waited on by troops of menials, with costly equipages, and splendid retinues ever at her command, only mingling with those whose lives were devoted to pleasure and amusement, conversant with no other themes than those which bore upon gaiety and dissipation, she was peculiarly unsuited to the wear and tear of a social system which demanded fully as much of self-sacrifice as of enjoyment. The long lessons my father would read to her of deference to this one, patient endurance of that, how she was to submit to the tiresome prosings of certain notorieties in respect of their political or social eminence, she certainly heard with most exemplary resignation; but by no effort of her reason, nor, indeed, of imagination, could she attain to the fact, why any one should associate with those distasteful to them, nor ever persuade herself that any worldly distinction could possibly be worth having at such a price.

She was quite sure—indeed, her own experience proved it—"that the world was full of pleasant people." Beauty to gaze on and wit to listen to, were certainly not difficult to be found; why, then, any one should persist in denying themselves the enjoyment derivable from such sources was as great a seeming absurdity as that of him who, turning his back on the rare flowers of a conservatory, would go forth to make his bouquet of the wild flowers and weeds of the roadside. Besides this, in the world wherein she had lived, her own gifts were precisely those which attracted most admiration and exerted most sway;

and it was somewhat hard to descend to a system where such a coinage was not accepted as currency, but rather regarded as gilded counters, pretty to look at, but, after all, a mere counterfeit money, unrecognised by the mint.

My father saw all this when it was too late; but he lost no time in vain repinings. On the contrary, having taken a cottage in a secluded part of North Wales, by way of passing the honeymoon in all the conventional isolation that season is condemned to, he devoted himself to that educational process at which I have hinted, and began to instil those principles, to the difficulty of whose acquirement I have just alluded.

I believe that his life, at this period, was one of as much happiness as ever is permitted to poor mortality in this world; so, at least, his letters to his friends bespeak it. It may be even doubted if the little diversities of taste and disposition between himself and my mother did not heighten the sense of his enjoyment; they assuredly averted that lassitude and ennui which are often the results of a connubial duet unreasonably prolonged. I know, too, that my poor mother often looked back to that place as to the very paradise of her existence. My father had encouraged such magnificent impressions of his ancestral house and demesne, that he was obliged to make great efforts to sustain the deception. An entire wing had to be built to complete the symmetry of the mansion. The roof had also to be replaced by another, of more costly construction. In the place of a stucco colonnade, one of polished granite was to be erected. The whole of the furniture was to be exchanged. Massive old cabinets and oaken chairs, handsome enough in their way, were but ill-suited to ceilings of fretted gold and walls hung in the rich draperies of Lyons. The very mirrors, which had been objects of intense admiration for their size and splendour, were now to be discarded for others of more modern pretensions. The china bowls and cups, which for centuries had been regarded as very gems of vertu, were thrown indignantly aside, to make place for Sèvres vases and rich groupings of pure Saxon. In fact, all the ordinary comforts and characteristics of a country gentleman's house were abandoned for the sumptuous and splendid furniture of a palace. To meet such expenses large sums were raised on loan, and two of the richest mines on the estate were heavily mortgaged. Of course it is needless to say, that preparations on such a scale of magnificence attracted a large share of public attention. The newspapers duly chronicled the increasing splendour of "Castle Carew." Scarcely a ship arrived without some precious consignment, either of pictures, marbles,

or tapestries : and these announcements were usually accompanied by some semi-mysterious paragraph about the vast wealth of the owner, and the great accession of fortune he had acquired by his marriage. On this latter point nothing was known, beyond the fact that the lady was of an ancient ducal family of France, of immense fortune, and eminently beautiful. Even my father's most intimate friends knew nothing beyond this ; for, however strange it may sound to our present-day notions, my father was ashamed of her illegitimacy, and rightly judged what would be the general opinion of her acquaintances should the fact become public. At last came the eventful day of the landing in Ireland, and, certainly, nothing could be more enthusiastic nor affectionate than the welcome that met them.

Personally my father's popularity was very great—politically he had already secured many admirers, since, even in the few months of his parliamentary life, he had distinguished himself on two or three occasions. His tone was manly and independent ; his appearance was singularly prepossessing ; and then, as he owned a large estate, and spent his money freely, it would have been hard if such qualities had not made him a favourite in Ireland.

It was almost a procession that accompanied him from the quay to the great hotel of the Drogheda Arms, where they stopped to breakfast.

"I am glad to see you back amongst us, Carew !" said Joe Parsons, one of my father's political advisers, a county member, of great weight with the Opposition. "We want every good and true man in his place just now."

"Faith, we missed you sorely at the Curragh meetings, Watty !" cried a sporting-looking young fellow, in "tops and leathers." "No such thing as a good handicap, nor a hurdle race for a finish, without you."

"Harry deplores those pleasant evening you used to spend at three-handed whist, with himself and Dick Morgan," said another, laughing.

"And where's Dick ?" asked my father, looking around him on every side.

"Poor Dick !" said the last speaker. "It's no fault of his that he's not here to shake your hand to-day. He was arrested about six weeks ago, on some bills he passed to Fagan."

"Old Tony alive still ?" said my father, laughing, "and what was the amount ?" added he, in a whisper.

"A heavy figure—above two thousand, I believe ; but Tony would be right glad to take five hundred."

"And couldn't Dick's friends do that much for him?" asked my father, half indignantly. "Why, when I left this, Dick was the very life of your city. A dinner without him was a failure. Men would rather have met him at the cover than seen the fox. His hearty face, and his warm shake-hands, were enough to inspire jollity into a Quaker meeting."

"All true, Watty: but there's been a general shipwreck of us all somehow. Where the money has gone, nobody knows; but every one seems out at elbows. You are the only fellow the sun shines upon."

"Make hay, then, when it does so," said my father, laughing; and, taking out his pocket book, he scribbled a few lines on a leaf which he tore out. "Give that to Dick, and tell him to come down and dine with us on Friday. You'll join him. Quin and Parsons won't refuse me. And what do you say, Gervy Power?—can you spare a day from the tennis-court, or an evening from picquet? Jack Gore, I count upon you. Harvey Hepton will drive you down, for I know you never can pay the post-boys."

"Egad, they're too well trained to expect it. The rascals always look to me for a hint about the young horses at the Curragh, and, now and then, I do throw a stray five-pound in their way."

"We have not seen madam yet. Are we not to have that honour to-day?" said Parsons.

"I believe not; she's somewhat tired. We had a stormy time of it," said my father, who rather hesitated about introducing his bachelor friends to my mother without some little preparation.

Nor was the caution quite unreasonable. Their style and breeding were totally unlike anything she had ever seen before. The tone of familiarity they used towards each other was the very opposite to that school of courtly distance which even the very nearest in blood or kindred observed in her own country; and, lastly, very few of those then present understood anything of French; and my mother's English, at the time I speak of, did not range beyond a few monosyllables, pronounced with an accent that made them all but unintelligible.

"You'll have Kitty Dwyer to call upon you the moment she hears you're come," said Quin.

"Charmed to see her, if she'll do us that honour," said my father, laughing.

"You must have no common impudence, then, Watty," said another; "you certainly jilted her."

"Nothing of the kind," replied my father; "she it was who refused me."

"Bother!" broke in an old squire, a certain Bob French, of Frenchmount; "Kitty refuse ten thousand a-year, and a good-looking fellow into the bargain! Kitty's no fool; and she knows mankind just as well as she knows horse-flesh; and faix that's not saying a trifle."

"How is she looking?" asked my father, rather anxious to change the topic.

"Just as you saw her last. She hurt her back at an ugly fence in Kennedy's park, last winter; but she's all right again, and riding the little black mare that killed Morrissy, as neatly as ever!"

"She's a fine dashing girl!" said my father.

"No, but she's a good girl," said the old squire, who evidently admired her greatly. "She rode eight miles, of a dark night, three weeks ago, to bring the doctor to old Hackett's wife, and it raining like a waterfall; and she gave him two guineas for the job. Ay, faith, and maybe, at the same time, two guineas was two guineas to her."

"Why Mat Dwyer is not so hard-up as that comes to?" exclaimed my father.

"Isn't he, faith? I don't believe he knows where to lay his hand on a fifty-pound note this morning. The truth is, Walter, Mat ran himself out for *you*."

"For me! How do you mean for me?"

"Just because he thought you'd marry Kitty. Oh! you needn't laugh. There's many more thought the same thing. You remember yourself that you were never out of the house. You used to pretend that Bishop's-Lough was a better cover than your own—that it was more of a grass country to ride over. Then, when summer came, you took to fishing, as if your bread depended on it; and the devil a salmon you ever hooked."

A roar of laughter from the surrounders showed how they relished the confusion of my father's manner.

"Even all that will scarcely amount to an offer of marriage," said he, in half pique.

"Nobody said it would," retorted the other; "but when you teach a girl to risk her life, four days in the week, over the highest fences in a hunting country—when she gives up stitching and embroidery, to tying flies and making brown hackles—when she'd rather drive a tandem than sit quiet in a coach and four—why, she's as good as spoiled for any one else. 'Tis the

same with women as with young horses—every one likes to break them in for himself. Some like a puller; others prefer a light mouth; and there's more that would rather go along without having to think at all, sure that, no matter how rough the road, there would be neither a false step nor stumble in it."

"And what's become of MacNaghten?" asked my father, anxious to change the topic.

"Scheming—scheming, just the same as ever. I'm sure I wonder he's not here to day. May I never! if that's not his voice I hear on the stairs. Talk of the devil——"

"And you're sure to see Dan MacNaghten," cried my father; and the next moment he was heartily shaking hands with a tall, handsome man, who, though barely thirty, was yet slightly bald on the top of the head. His eyes were blue and large: their expression full of the joyous merriment of a happy schoolboy—a temperament that his voice and laugh fully confirmed.

"Watty, boy, it's as good as a day rule to have a look at you again," cried he. "There's not a man can fill your place when you're away—devil a one."

"There he goes—there he goes!" muttered old French, with a sly wink at the others.

"Ireland wasn't herself without you, my boy," continued MacNaghten. "We were obliged to put up with Tom Burke's harriers and old French's claret; and the one has no more scent than the other has bouquet."

French's face at this moment elicited such a roar of laughter as drowned the remainder of the speech.

"'Twas little time you had either to run with the one or drink the other, Dan," said he; "for you were snug in Kilmainham the whole of the winter."

"*Otium cum dignitate*," said Dan. "I spent my evenings in drawing up a bill for the better recovery of small debts."

"How so, Dan?"

"Lending enough more, to bring the debtor into the superior courts—trying him for murder instead of manslaughter."

"Faith, you'd do either if you were put to it," said French, who merely heard the words, without understanding the context.

Dan MacNaghten was now included in my father's invitation to Castle Carew; and, after a few other allusions to past events and absent friends, they all took their leave, and my father hastened to join his bride.

"You thought them very noisy, my dear," said my father, in

reply to a remark of hers. "They, I have no doubt, were perfectly astonished at their excessive quietness—an air of decorum only assumed, because they heard you were in the next room."

"They were not afraid of me, I trust," said she smiling.

"Not exactly afraid," said my father, with a very peculiar smile.



CHAPTER III.

A FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

THE celebrated money-lender and bill-discounter of Dublin in the times we speak of, was a certain Mr. Fagan, popularly called the "The Grinder," from certain peculiarities in his dealings with those who stood in need of his aid. He had been, and indeed so had his father before him, a fruit-seller, in a quarter of the city called Mary's-abbey—a trade which he still affected to carry on, although it was well known that the little transactions of the front shop bore no imaginable proportion to the important events which were conducted in the small and gloomy back-parlour behind it.

It was a period of unbounded extravagance. Few even of the wealthiest lived within their incomes. Many maintained a style and pretension far beyond their fortunes, the first seeds of that crop of ruin whose harvest we are now witnessing. By large advances on mortgage, and great loans at moments of extreme pressure, the Grinder had amassed an immense fortune, at the same time that he possessed a very considerable influence in many counties, in whose elections he took a deep although secret interest.

If money-getting and money-hoarding was the great passion of his existence, it was in reality so in furtherance of two objects, on which he seemed to have set his whole heart. One of these was the emancipation of the Catholics; the other, the elevation of his only child, a daughter, to rank and station, by means of a high marriage.

On these two themes his every thought was fixed; and however closely the miser's nature had twined itself around his

own, all the thirst for gain, all the greed of usury, gave way before these master-passions. So much was he under their guidance, that no prospect of advantage ever withdrew him from their prosecution; and he who looked for the Grinder's aid, must at least have appeared to him as likely to contribute towards one or other of these objects.

Strange as it may seem to our modern notions, the political ambition seemed easier of success than the social. With all their moneyed embarrassments, the higher classes of Ireland refused to stoop to an alliance with the families of the rich plebeians, and were much more ready to tamper with their conscience on questions of state, than to abate a particle of their pride on a matter of family connection. In this way, Mr. Fagan could command many votes in the House from those who would have indignantly refused his invitation to a dinner.

In pursuit of this plan, he had given his daughter the best education that money could command. She had masters in every modern language, and in every fashionable accomplishment. She was naturally clever and quick of apprehension, and possessed considerable advantages in person and deportment. Perhaps an overweening sense of her own importance, in comparison with those about her, imparted a degree of assumption to her manner, or perhaps this was instilled into her as a suitable lesson for some future position; but so was it, that much of the gracefulness of her youth was impaired by this fault, which gradually settled down into an almost stern and defiant hardness of deportment—a quality little likely to be popular in high society.

A false position invariably engenders a false manner, and hers was eminently so. Immeasurably above those with whom she associated, she saw a great gulf between her and that set with whose habits and instincts she had been trained to assimilate. To condescend to intimacy with her father's guests, was to undo all the teachings of her life; and yet how barren seemed every hope of ascending to anything higher! No young proprietor had attained his majority for some years back, without being canvassed by the Grinder as a possible match for his daughter. He well knew the pecuniary circumstances of them all. To some he had lent largely, and yet somehow, although his emissaries were active in spreading the intelligence that Bob Fagan's daughter would have upwards of three hundred thousand pounds, it seemed a point of honour amongst this class that none should descend to such a union, nor stoop to an alliance with the usurer. If, in the wild orgies of after-dinner

in the mad debauchery of the mess-table, some reckless spendthrift would talk of marrying Polly Fagan, a burst of mockery and laughter was certain to hail the proposition. In fact, any alternative of doubtful honesty, any stratagem to defeat a creditor, seemed a more honourable course than such a project.

There were kind friends—mayhap amongst them were some disappointed suitors—ready to tell Polly how she was regarded by this set; and this consciousness on her part did not assuredly add to the softness of a manner that each day was rendering her more cold and severe; and, from despising those of her own rank, she now grew to hate that above her.

It so chanced that my father was one of those on whom Fagan had long speculated for a son-in-law. There was something in the careless ease of his character that suggested the hope that he might not be very difficult of persuasion; and, as his habits of expense required large and prompt supplies, the Grinder made these advances with a degree of liberality that could not fail to be flattering to a young heir.

On more than one occasion, the money was paid down before the lawyers had completed the documents; and this confidence in my father's honour had greatly predisposed him in Fagan's favour. The presumptuous idea of an alliance with him would have, of course, routed such impressions, but this never occurred to my father. It is very doubtful that he could have brought himself to believe the thing possible. So secret had been my father's marriage that none, even of his most intimate friends, knew of it, till within a short time before he arrived in Ireland. The great outlay at Castle Carew of course attracted its share of gossip, but all seemed to think that these were the preparations for an event not yet decided on. This also was Fagan's reading of it; and he watched with anxious intensity every step and detail of that costly expenditure in which his now last hope was centred.

"He must come to me for all this; I, alone, can be the paymaster here," was his constant reflection, as he surveyed plans which required a princely fortune to execute, and which no private income could possibly have supported by a suitable style of living. "A hundred thousand pounds will pay for all," was the consolatory thought with which he solaced himself for this extravagance.

The frequent calls for money, the astounding sums demanded from time to time, did indeed alarm Fagan. The golden limit of a hundred thousand had long been passed, and yet came no sign of retrenchment; on the contrary, the plans

for the completion of the Castle were on a scale of even greater magnificence.

It was to assure himself as to the truth of these miraculous narratives, to see with his own eyes the splendours of which he had heard so much, that Fagan once undertook a journey down to Castle Carew. For reasons, the motives of which may be as well guessed as described, he was accompanied by his daughter. Seeming to be engaged on a little tour of the county, they arrived at the village inn at nightfall, and the following morning readily obtained the permission to visit the grounds and the mansion.

Perhaps there is no higher appreciation of landscape beauty than that of him who emerges from the dark and narrow street of some busy city—from its noise, and smoke, and din—from its vexatious cares and harassing duties, and strolls out, of a bright spring morning, through the grassy fields and leafy lanes of a rural country; there is a repose, a sense of tranquil calm in the scene, so refreshing to those whose habitual rest comes of weariness and exhaustion. No need is there of the painter's eye nor the poet's fancy to enjoy to the utmost that rich combination of sky, and wood, and glassy lake.

There may be nothing of artistic excellence in the appreciation, but the sense of pleasure, of happiness even, is to the full as great.

It was in such a mood that Fagan found himself that morning slowly stealing along a woodland-path, his daughter at his side; halting wherever a chance opening afforded a view of the landscape, they walked leisurely on, each, as it were, respecting the other's silence. Not that their secret thoughts were indeed alike—far from it! The daughter had marked the tranquil look, the unembarrassed expression of those features so habitually agitated and careworn: she saw the sense of relief even one day, one single day of rest, had brought with it. Why should it not be always thus? thought she. He needs no longer to toil and strive. His might be a life of quietude and peace. Our fortune is far above our wants, beyond even our wishes. We might at last make friendships, real friendships, amongst those who would look on us as equals and neighbours, not as usurers and oppressors.

While such was passing in the daughter's mind, the father's thoughts ran thus:—Can she see these old woods, these waving lawns, these battlemented towers, topping the great oaks of centuries, and yet not wish to be their mistress? Does no ambition stir her heart to think, these might be mine? He

scanned her features closely, but in her drooping eyelids and pensive look he could read no signs of the spirit he sought for.

"Polly," said he, at length, "this is finer, far finer than I expected; the timber is better grown, the demesne itself more spacious. I hardly looked for such a princely place."

"It is very beautiful," said she, pensively.

"A proud thing to be the owner of, Polly—a proud thing! This is not the home of some wealthy citizen; these trees are like blazons of nobility, girl."

"One might be very happy here, father," said she, in the same low voice.

"The very thought of my own mind, Polly," cried he, eagerly. "The highest in the land could ask for nothing better. The estate has been in his family for four or five generations. The owner of such a place has but to choose what he would become. If he be talented, and with capacity for public life, think of him in Parliament, taking up some great question, assailing some time-worn abuse—some remnant of that barbarous code that once enslaved us, and standing forward as the leader of an Irish party. How gracefully patriotism would sit on one who could call this his own! Not the sham patriotism of your envious plebeian, nor the mock independence of the needy lawyer, but the sturdy determination to make his country second to none. There's the Castle itself," cried he suddenly, as they emerged into an open space in front of the building; and, amazed at the spacious and splendid edifice before them, they both stood several minutes in silent admiration.

"I scarcely thought any Irish gentleman had a fortune to suit this," said she, at length.

"You are right, Polly; nor has Carew himself. The debts he will have incurred to build that Castle will hamper his estate, and cripple him and those that are to come after him. Nothing short of a large sum of ready money, enough to clear off every mortgage and incumbrance at once, could enable this young fellow to save them. Even then, his style should not be the spendthrift waste they say he is fond of. A princely household he might have, nobly maintained, and perfect in all its details, but with good management, girl. You must remember that, Polly."

She started at this direct appeal to herself; and, as her cheeks grew crimson with conscious shame, she turned away to avoid his glance—not that the precaution was needed, for he was far too much immersed in his own thoughts to observe her.

Polly had on more than one occasion seen through the ambitious schemes of her father. She had detected many a deep-laid plot he had devised to secure for her that eminence and station he longed for. Deep and painful were the wounds of her offended pride at the slights, the insults of these defeated plans. Resentments that were to last her lifetime had grown of them, and in her heart a secret grudge towards that class from which they sprung. Over and over had she endeavoured to summon up courage to tell him that, to her, these schemes were become hateful; that all dignity, all self respect, were sacrificed in this unworthy struggle. At last came the moment of hardihood; and in a few words, at first broken and indistinct, but more assured and distinct as she went on, she said that she, at least, could never partake in his ambitious views.

"I have seen you yourself, father, after a meeting with one of these—these high and titled personages, come home pale, careworn, and ill. The contumely of their manner had so offended you, that you sat down to your meal without appetite. You could not speak to me; or, in a few words you dropped, I could read the bitter chagrin that was corroding your heart. You owned to me, that in the very moment of receiving favours from you, they never forgot the wide difference of rank that separated you: nay more, that they accepted your services as a rightful homage to their high estate, and made you feel a kind of serfdom in your very generosity."

"Why all this? To what end do you tell me these things, girl?" cried he angrily, while his cheek trembled with passion.

"Because if I conceal them longer—if I do not speak them—they will break my heart," said she, in an accent of deepest emotion; "because the grief they give me has worn me to very wretchedness. Is it not clear to you, father, that they wish none of us—that our blood is not their blood, nor our traditions their traditions?"

"Hold—stop—be silent, I say, or you will drive me distracted," said he, grasping her wrist in a paroxysm of rage.

"I will speak out," said she, resolutely. "The courage I now feel may, perhaps, never return to me. There is nothing humiliating in our position, save what we owe to ourselves—there is no meanness in our rank in life, save when we are ashamed of it! Our efforts to be what we were not born to be—what we ought not to be—what we cannot be: these may, indeed, make us despicable and ridiculous, for there are things in this world, father, that not even gold can buy."

"By heaven that is not true!" said he, fiercely. "There never

yet was that in rank, honour, and distinction, that was not ticketed with its own price! Our haughtiest nobility—the proudest duke in the land—knows well what his alliance with a plebeian order has done for him. Look about you, girl. Who are these marchionesses—these countesses—who sweep past us in their pride? The daughters of men of my own station—the wealthy traders of the country——”

“And what is their position, father?—a living lie. What is their haughty carriage?—the assumption of a state they were not born to—the insolent pretension to despise all amidst which they passed their youth, their earliest friendships, their purest, best days. Let them, on the other hand, cling to these—let them love what has grown into their natures from infancy—the home, the companions of their happy childhood, and see how the world will scoff at their vulgarity, their innate degeneracy, their low-born habits—vulgar if generous, vulgar when saving; their costly tastes a reproach, their parsimony a sneer.”

There was a passionate energy in her tone and manner, which, heightening the expression of her handsome features, made her actually beautiful; and her father half forgot the opposition to his opinions, in his admiration of her. As he still gazed at her, the sharp sound of a horse's canter was heard behind them; and, on turning round, they saw advancing towards them a young man, mounted on a blood horse, which he rode with all the careless ease of one accustomed to the saddle; his feet dangling loosely out of the stirrups, and one hand thrust into the pocket of his shooting-jacket.

“Stand where you are!” he cried, as the father and daughter were about to move aside, and give him room to pass; and immediately after he rushed his horse at the huge trunk of a fallen beech tree, and cleared it with a spring.

“He'll be perfect at timber, when he gets a little cooler in temper,” said he, turning on his saddle; and then recognizing Fagan, he reined short in, and called out, “Halloo, Tony! who ever expected to see you here? Miss Polly, your servant. A most unexpected pleasure this,” added he, springing from his saddle, and advancing towards them with his hat off.

“It is not often I indulge myself with a holiday, Mr. MacNaghten,” said Fagan, as though half ashamed of the confession.

“So much the worse for you, Fagan, and for your handsome daughter here; not to speak of the poor thriftless devils, like myself, who are the objects of your industrious hours. Eh,

Tony, isn't that true?" and he laughed heartily at his impudent joke.

"And if it were not for such industry, sir," said the daughter, sternly, "how many like you would be abroad to-day?"

"By Jove, you are quite right, Miss Polly. It is exactly as you say. Your excellent father is the providence of us younger sons; and I, for one, will never prove ungrateful to him. But pray let us turn to another theme. Shall I show you the grounds and the gardens? The house is in such a mess of confusion, that it is scarcely worth seeing. The conservatory, however, and the dairy are nearly finished; and if you can breakfast on grapes and a pine-apple, with fresh cream to wash them down, I'll promise to entertain you."

"We ask for nothing better, Mr. MacNaghten," said Fagan, who was not sorry to prolong an interview that might afford him the information he sought for.

"Now for breakfast, and then for sight-seeing," said Dan, politely offering his arm to the young lady, and leading the way towards the house.



CHAPTER IV.

A BREAKFAST AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

To do the honours of another man's house is a tremendous test of tact. In point of skill or address, we know of few things more difficult. The ease which sits so gracefully on a host becomes assurance when practised by a representative; and there is a species of monarchy about the lord of a household, that degenerates into usurpation in the hands of a pretender. It is not improbable, then, Dan MacNaghten's success in this trying part was mainly attributable to the fact that he had never thought of its difficulty. He had gone through a fine property in a few years of dissipation, during which he had played the entertainer so often and so well, that nothing seemed to him more natural than a seat at the head of a table, nor any task more simple or agreeable than to dispense its hospitalities.

The servants of the Castle were well accustomed to obey him, and when he gave his orders for breakfast to be speedily laid out in the conservatory, they set about the preparations with zeal and activity. With such promptitude, indeed, were the arrangements made, that by the time MacNaghten had conducted his guests to the spot, all was in readiness awaiting them.

The place was admirably chosen, being a central point in the conservatory, from which alleys branched out in different directions; some opening upon little plots of flowers or ornamental shrubbery, others disclosing views of the woodland scenery or the distant mountains beyond it. The table was spread beside a marble basin, into which a little group of sportive Titans were seen spouting. Great Nile lilies floated on the crystal surface, and gold and silver fish flashed and glittered below. The board itself, covered with luscious fruit, most temptingly arranged amidst beautiful flowers, displayed, besides, some gorgeous specimens of Sèvres and Saxony, hastily taken from their packing-cases, while a large vase of silver, richly chased, stood in the centre, and exhibited four views of the Castle, painted in medallions on its sides.

"If you'll sit here, Miss Polly," said MacNaghten, "you'll

have a prettier view, for you'll see the lake, and catch a peep, too, of the Swiss Cottage on the crag above it. I must show you the cottage after breakfast. It was a bit of fancy of my own; copied, I am free to confess, from one I saw in the Oberland. Fagan, help yourself; you'll find these cutlets excellent. Our friend Carew has made an admirable choice of a cook."

"You treat us in princely fashion, sir," said Fagan, whose eyes glanced from the splendour before him to his daughter, and there tried to read her thoughts.

"You gave me no time for that; had you told me you were coming down, I'd have tried to receive you properly. As it is, pray make up your mind to stay a day or two—Carew will be so delighted: nothing flatters him so much as to hear praise of this place."

"Ah, sir, you forget that men like myself have but few holidays."

"So much the worse, Fagan; remember what the adage says about all work and no play. Not, by Jove, but I'm sure that the converse of the proposition must have its penalty, too; for if not, I should have been a marvellously clever fellow. Ay, Miss Polly, my life has been all play."

"A greater fault than the other, sir, and with this addition, too, that it makes proselytes," said she, gravely; "my father's theory finds fewer followers."

"And you not one of them?" said MacNaghten, rapidly; while he fixed a look of shrewd inquiry on her.

"Assuredly not," replied she, in a calm and collected tone.

"By Jove, I could have sworn to it," cried he, with a burst of enthusiastic delight. "There, Fagan, you see Miss Polly takes my side after all."

"I have not said so," rejoined she, gravely. "Gain and waste are nearer relatives than they suspect."

"I must own that I have never known but one of the family," said Dan, with one of those hearty laughs which seemed to reconcile him to any turn of fortune. Fagan all this time was ill at ease and uncomfortable; the topic annoyed him, and he gladly took occasion to change it by an allusion to the wine.

"And yet there are people who will tell you not to drink champagne for breakfast," exclaimed Dan, draining his glass as he spoke; "as if any man could be other than better with this glorious tippie. Miss Polly, your good health, though it seems superfluous to wish you anything."

She bowed half coldly to the compliment, and Fagan added hurriedly, "We are at least contented with our lot in life, Mr. MacNaghten."

"Egad, I should think you were, Tony, and no great merit in the resignation, after all. Put yourself in my position, however—fancy yourself Dan MacNaghten for one brief twenty-four hours. Think of a fellow who began the world—ay, and that not so very long ago either—with something over five thousand a-year, and a good large sum in bank, and who now, as he sits here, only spends five shillings when he writes his name on a stamp; who once had houses, and hounds, and horses, but who now sits in the rumble, and rides a borrowed hack. If you want to make a virtue of your contentment, Fagan, change places with me."

"But would you take mine, Mr. MacNaghten?—would you toil, and slave, and fag—would you shut out the sun, that your daily labour should have no suggestive temptings to enjoyment—would you satisfy yourself that the world should be to you one everlasting struggle, till at last the very capacity to feel it otherwise was lost to you for ever?"

"That's more than I am able to picture to myself," said MacNaghten, sipping his wine. "I've lain in a ditch for two hours with a broken thigh-bone, thinking all the time of the jolly things I'd do when I'd get well again; I've spent some very rainy weeks in a debtor's prison, weaving innumerable enjoyments for the days when I should be at liberty; so that as to any conception of a period when I should not be able to be happy, it's clean and clear beyond me."

Polly's eyes were fixed on him as he spoke, and while their expression was almost severe, the heightened colour of her cheeks showed that she listened to him with a sense of pleasure.

"I suppose it's in the family," continued Dan, gaily. "My poor father used to say that no men have such excellent digestion as those that have nothing to eat."

"And has it never occurred to you, sir," said Polly, with a degree of earnestness in her voice and manner—"has it never occurred to you that this same buoyant temperament could be turned to other and better account than mere"—she stopped, and blushed, and then, as if by an effort, went on—"mere selfish enjoyment? Do you not feel that he who can reckon on such resources, but applies them to base uses when he condescends to make them the accessories of his pleasures? Is there nothing within your heart to whisper that a nature such as this was

given for higher and nobler purposes ; and that he who has the spirit to confront real danger should not sit down contented with a mere indifference to shame ? ”

“ Polly ! Polly ! ” cried her father, alike overwhelmed by the boldness and the severity of her speech.

“ By Jove, the young lady has given me a canter,” cried MacNaghten, who, in spite of all his good temper, grew crimson ; “ and I only wish the lesson had come earlier. Yes, Miss Polly,” added he, in a voice of more feeling, “ it’s too late now.”

“ You must forgive my daughter, Mr. MacNaghten—she is not unusually so presumptuous,” said Fagan, rising from the table, while he darted a reproving glance towards Polly ; “ besides, we are encroaching most unfairly on your time.”

“ Are you so ? ” cried Dan, laughing. “ I never heard it called mine before ! Why, Tony, it’s yours, and everybody’s that has need of it. But if you’ll not eat more, let me show you the grounds. They are too extensive for a walk, Miss Polly, so with your leave, we’ll have something to drive ; meanwhile I’ll tell the gardener to pluck you some flowers.”

Fagan waited till MacNaghten was out of hearing, and then turned angrily towards his daughter.

“ You have given him a sorry specimen of your breeding, Polly ; I thought, indeed, you would have known better.”

“ You forget already, then, the speech with which he accosted us,” said she haughtily ; “ but my memory is better, sir.”

“ His courtesy might have effaced the recollection, I think,” said Fagan, testily.

“ His courtesy ! Has he not told you himself that every gift he possesses is but an emanation of his selfishness ? The man who can be anything so easily, will be nothing if it cost a sacrifice.”

“ I don’t care what he is,” said Fagan, in a low, distinct voice, as though he wanted every word to be heard attentively. “ For what he has been, and what he will be, I care just as little. It is where he moves, and lives, and exerts influence—these are what concern me.”

“ Are the chance glimpses that we catch of that high world so attractive, father ? ” said she, in an accent of almost imploring eagerness. “ Do they, indeed, requite us for the cost we pay for them ? When we leave the vulgar circle of our equals, is it to hear of generous actions, exalted sentiments, high-souled motives ; or is it not to find every vice that stains the low-pampered up into greater infamy amongst the noble ? ”

"This is romance and folly, girl. Who ever dreamed it should be otherwise? Nature stamped no nobility on gold, nor made copper plebeian. This had been the work of men; and so of the distinctions among themselves, and it will not do for us to dispute the ordinance. Station is power, wealth is power; he who has neither, is but a slave; he who has both, may be all that he would be!"

A sudden gesture to enforce caution followed these words; and at the same time MacNaghten's merry voice was heard, singing as he came along—

"'Kneel down there, and say a prayer,
Before my hounds shall eat you.'
'I have no prayer,' the Fox replied,
'For I was bred a Quaker.'"

"All right, Miss Polly. Out of compliment to you, I suppose, Kitty Dwyer, that would never suffer a collar over her head for the last six weeks, has consented to be harnessed as gently as a lamb; and my own namesake, 'Dan the Smasher,' has been traced up, without as much as one strap broken. They're a little pair I have been breaking in for Carew; for he's intolerably lazy, and expects to find his nags trained to perfection. Look at them, how they come along—no bearing reins—no blinkers. That's what I call a very neat turn out."

The praise was, assuredly, not unmerited, as two high-bred black ponies swept past with a beautiful phaeton, and drew up at the door of the conservatory.

The restless eyes, the wide-spread nostrils, and quivering flanks of the animals, not less than the noiseless caution of the grooms at their heads, showed that their education had not yet been completed; and so Fagan remarked at once.

"They look rakish—there's no denying it!" said MacNaghten; "but they are gentleness itself. The only difficulty is to put the traps on them; once fairly on, there's nothing to apprehend. You are not afraid of them, Miss Polly?" said he, with a strong emphasis on the "you."

"When you tell me that I need not be, I have no fears," said she, calmly.

"I must be uncourteous enough to say, that I do not concur in the sentiment," said Fagan; "and, with your leave, Mr. MacNaghten, we will walk."

"Walk! Why, to see anything, you'll have twelve miles a-foot. It musn't be thought of, Miss Polly—I cannot hear of it!" She bowed, as though in half assent; and he continued—

"Thanks for the confidence; you shall see it is not misplaced. Now, Fagan——"

"I am decided, Mr. MacNaghten; I'll not venture; nor will I permit my daughter to risk her life."

"Neither would I, I should hope," said MacNaghten; and, although the words were uttered with something of irritation, there was that in the tone that made Polly blush deeply.

"It's too bad, by Jove!" muttered he, half aloud, "when a man has so few things that he really can do, to deny his skill in the one he knows best."

"I am quite ready, sir," said Polly, in that tone of determination which she was often accustomed to assume, and against which her father rarely or never disputed.

"There now, Fagan; get up into the rumble. I'll not ask you to be the coachman. Come, come—no more opposition; we shall make them impatient if we keep them standing much longer."

As he spoke, he offered his arm to Polly, who, with a smile—the first she had deigned to give him—accepted it, and then hastily leading her forward, he handed her into the carriage. In an instant MacNaghten was beside her. With the instinct of hot-tempered cattle, they no sooner felt a hand upon the reins, than they became eager to move forward, and, while one pawed the ground with impatience, the other, retiring to the very limit of the pole-strap, prepared for a desperate plunge.

"Up with you, Fagan; be quick—be quick!" cried Dan. "It won't do to hold them in. Let them go, lads, or they'll smash everything!" and the words were hardly out, when, with a tremendous bound, that carried the front wheels off the road, away they went. "Meet us at the other gate—they'll show you the way," cried MacNaghten, as, standing up, he pointed with his whip in the direction he meant. He had no time for more; for all his attention was now needed to the horses, as, each exciting the other, they dashed madly on down the road.

"This comes of keeping them standing," muttered Dan; "and the scoundrels have curbed them up too tight. You're not afraid, Miss Polly? By Jove, that was a dash—Kitty showed her heels over the splash-board. Look at that devil Dan—see how he's bearing on the pole-piece!—an old trick of his.

A tremendous cut on his flank now drove him almost furious, and the enraged animal set off at speed.

"We must let them blow themselves, Miss Polly. It all comes

of their standing so long.—You're not afraid?—Well, then, they may do their worst."

By this time the pace had become a tearing gallop, and seeing that nothing short of some miles would suffice to tame them down, MacNaghten turned their heads in the direction of a long avenue, which led towards the sea.

It was all in vain that Fagan hastened through the flower-garden, and across a private shrubbery; when he reached the "gate," there was no sign of the phaeton. The cuckoo and the thrush were the only voices heard in the stillness; and, at intervals, the deep booming of the sea, miles distant, told how unbroken was the silence around. His mind was a conflict of fear and anger; terrible anxieties for his daughter were mixed up with passion at this evidence of her wayward nature; and he walked along, reproaching himself bitterly for having accepted the civilities of MacNaghten.

Fagan's own schemes for a high alliance for his daughter had made him acquainted with many a counterplot of adventurers against himself. He well knew what a prize Polly Fagan was deemed amongst the class of broken down and needy spendthrifts who came to him for aid. Often and often had he detected the first steps of such machinations, till, at length, he had become suspicious of everything and everybody. Now, MacNaghten was exactly the kind of man he most dreaded in this respect. There was that recklessness about him that comes of broken fortune; he was the very type of a desperate adventurer, ready to seize any chance to restore himself to fortune and independence. Who could answer for such a man in such an emergency?

Driven almost mad with these terrors, he now hastened his steps, stopping at times to listen, and at times calling on his daughter in the wildest accents. Without knowing whither he went, he soon lost himself in the mazes of the wood, and wandered on for hours in a state bordering upon distraction. Suspicion had so mastered his reason that he had convinced himself the whole was a deliberate scheme—that MacNaghten had planned all beforehand. In his disordered fancies, he did not scruple to accuse his daughter of complicity, and inveighed against her falsehood and treachery in the bitterest words. And what was Dan MacNaghten doing all this time? Anything, everything, in short, but what he was accused of! In good truth, he had little time for love-making, had such a project even entered his head, so divided were his attentions between the care of the cattle and his task of describing the different scenes

through which they passed at speed—the prospect being like one of those modern inventions called dissolving views—no sooner presenting an object than superseding it by another. In addition to all this, he had to reconcile Miss Polly to what seemed a desertion of her father; so that, what with his “cares of coachman, cicerone, and consoler,” as he himself afterwards said, it was clean beyond him to slip in even a word on his own part. It is no part of my task to inquire how Polly enjoyed the excursion, or whether the dash of recklessness, so unlike every incident of her daily life, did not repay her for any discomfort of her father’s absence: certain is it that when, after about six miles traversed in less than half an hour, they returned to the Castle, her first sense of apprehension was felt by not finding her father to meet her. No sooner had MacNaghten conducted her to the library than he set out himself in search of Fagan, having despatched messengers in all directions on the same errand. Dan, it must be owned, had far rather have remained to reassure Miss Polly, and convince her that her father’s absence would be but momentary; but he felt that it was a point of duty with him to go—and go he did.

It chanced that, by dint of turning and winding, Fagan had at length approached the Castle again, so that MacNaghten came up with him within a few minutes after his search began. “Safe, and where?” were the only words the old man could utter as he grasped the other’s arm. Dan, who attributed the agitation to but one cause, proceeded at once to reassure him on the score of his daughter’s safety, detailing, at the same time, the circumstances which compelled him to turn off in a direction the opposite of that he intended. Fagan drank in every word with eagerness, his grey eyes piercingly fixed on the speaker all the while. Great as was his agitation throughout, it became excessive when MacNaghten chanced to allude to Polly personally, and to speak of the courage she displayed.

“She told you that she was not afraid?—she said so to yourself?” cried he, eagerly.

“Ay, a dozen times,” replied Dan, freely. “It was impossible to have behaved better.”

“You said so—you praised her for it, I have no doubt,” said the other, with a grim effort at a smile.

“To be sure I did, Tony. By Jove, you’ve reason to be proud of her. I don’t speak of her beauty, that every one can see; but she’s a noble-minded girl. She would grace any station in the land.”

“She heard you say as much with pleasure, I’m certain,” said Fagan, with a smile that was more than half a sneer.

"Nay, faith, Tony, I did not go so far. I praised her courage. I told her that not every man could have behaved so bravely.

MacNaghten paused at this.

"And then—and then, sir," cried Fagan, impatiently.

Dan turned suddenly towards him, and, to his amazement, beheld a countenance tremulous with passionate excitement.

"What then, sir? Tell me what then. I have a right to ask, and I will know it. I'm her father, and I demand it."

"Why, what in Heaven's name is the matter?" exclaimed MacNaghten. "I have told you she is safe—that she is yonder."

"I speak not of that, sir; and you know it," cried Fagan, imperiously. "The dissimulation is unworthy of you. You ought to be a man of honour."

"Egad, good temper would be the best quality for me just now," said the other, with a smile; "for you seem bent on testing it."

"I see it all," cried Fagan, in a voice of anguish. "I see it all. Now hear me, Mr. MacNaghten. You are one who has seen much of the world, and will readily comprehend me. You are a man reputed to be kind-hearted, and you will not pain me by affecting a misunderstanding. Will you leave this to-morrow, and go abroad, say for a year or two? Give me your hand on it, and draw on me for one thousand pounds."

"Why, Tony, what has come over you? Is it the air of the place has disordered your excellent faculties? What can you mean?"

"This is no answer to my question, sir," said Fagan, rudely.

"I cannot believe you serious in putting it," said MacNaghten, half proudly. "Neither you nor any other man has the right to make such a proposal to me."

"I say that I have, sir. I repeat it. I am her father, and by one dash of my pen she is penniless to-morrow. Ay, by Heaven, it is what I will do if you drive me to it."

"At last I catch your meaning," said MacNaghten, "and I see where your suspicions have been pointing at. No, no; keep your money. It might be a capital bargain for me, Tony, if I had the conscience to close with it, and if you knew but all, you've no right to offer so much temptation. That path will bring you to the Castle. You'll find Miss Polly in the library. Good bye, Fagan."

And without waiting for a reply, MacNaghten turned abruptly away, and disappeared in the wood.

Fagan stood for a second or two deep in thought, and then bent his steps towards the Castle.



CHAPTER V.

JOE RAPER.

THE little incident which forms the subject of the last chapter occurred some weeks before my father's return to Ireland, and while as yet the fact of his marriage was still a secret to all, save his most intimate friends. The morning after Fagan's visit, however, MacNaghten received a few lines from my father, desiring him to look after and "pass" through the Custom House certain packages of value which would arrive there about that time. It chanced that poor Dan's circumstances just at this moment made seclusion the safer policy, and so he forwarded the commission to Fagan.

The packages contained the wardrobe of Madame de Carew, and revealed the mystery of my father's marriage. Fagan's plans and speculations must have attained to a great maturity in his own mind, to account for the sudden shock which this intelligence gave him. He was habitually a cautious calculator, rarely or never carried away by hope beyond the bounds of stern reality, and only accepting the "probable" as the "possible." In this instance, however, he must have suffered himself a wider latitude of expectation, for the news almost stunned him. Vague as were the chances of obtaining my father for a son-in-law, they were yet fair subjects of speculation; and he felt like one who secures a great number of tickets in a lottery, to augment his likelihood to win. Despite of all this, he had now to bear the disappointment of a "blank." The great alliance on which he had built all his hopes of position and station, was lost to him for ever; and unable to bear up against the unexpected stroke of fortune, he feigned illness and withdrew.

It is very difficult for some men to sever the pain of a dis-

appointment from a sense of injury towards the innocent cause of it. Unwilling to confess that they have calculated ill, they turn their anger into some channel apart from themselves. In the present case Fagan felt as if my father had done him a foul wrong: as though he had been a party to the deceit he practised on himself, and had actually traded on the hopes which stirred his own heart. He hastened home, and, passing through the little shop, entered the dingy parlour behind it.

At a large, high desk, at each side of which stood innumerable pigeon-holes crammed with papers, a very diminutive man was seated writing. His suit of snuff-brown was worn and threadbare, but scrupulously clean, as was also the large cravat of spotless white which inclosed his neck like a pillory. His age might have been about fifty-one or two; some might have guessed him more, for his features were cramped and contracted with wrinkles, which, with the loss of one of his eyes from small-pox, made him appear much older than he was. His father had been one of the first merchants of Dublin, in whose ruin and bankruptcy, it was said, Fagan's father had a considerable share. The story also ran, that Joe Raper—such was his name—had been the accepted suitor of her who subsequently married Fagan. The marriage having been broken off when these disasters became public, young Raper was forced by poverty to relinquish his career as a student of Trinity College, and become a clerk in Fagan's office, and an inmate of his house. In this station he had passed youth and manhood, and was now growing old; his whole ambition in life being to see the daughter of his former sweetheart grow up in beauty and accomplishments, and to speculate with himself on some great destiny in store for her. Polly's mother had died within two years after her marriage, and to her child had Joe transmitted all the love and affection he had borne to herself. He had taken charge of her education from infancy, and had laboured hard himself to acquire such knowledge as might keep him in advance of his gifted pupil. But for this self-imposed task it is more than likely that all his little classic lore had been long forgotten, and that the graceful studies of his earlier days had been obliterated by the wear and tear of a life so little in unison with them. To be her teacher, he had toiled through the long hours of the night, hoarding up his miserable earnings to buy some coveted book of reference—some deeply-prized authority in criticism. By dint of downright labour—for his was not one of those bright intelligences that acquire as if by instinct—he had mastered several of the modern languages

of Europe, and refreshed his knowledge of the ancient ones. With such companionship and such training, Polly Fagan's youth had been fashioned into that strange compound, where high ambitions and gentle tastes warred with each other, and the imaginative faculties were cultivated amidst views of life alone suggestive of gain and money-getting.

If Fagan took little interest in the care bestowed by Raper on his daughter's education, he was far from indifferent to the devotion of his faithful follower; while Joe, on the other hand, well knowing that without him the complicated business of the house could not be carried on for a single day, far from presuming on his indispensable services, only felt the more bound in honour to endure any indignity rather than break with one so dependent on him. It had been a kind of traditionary practice with the Fagans not to keep regular books, but to commit all their transactions to little fragments of paper, which were stuffed, as it seemed, recklessly into some one or other of that vast nest of pigeon-holes, which, like a gigantic honeycomb, formed the background of Joe Raper's desk, and of which he alone, of men, knew the secret geography. No guide existed to these mysterious receptacles, save when occasionally the name of some suitor of uncommon importance appeared over a compartment; and as in evidence of what a share our family enjoyed in such distinction, I have heard that the word "Carew" figured over as many as five of these little cells.

Joe turned round hastily on his stool as his chief entered, and saluted him with a respectful bow; and then, as if continuing some unbroken thread of discourse, said, "Whyte is protested—Figgis and Read stopped."

"What of Grogan?" said Fagan, harshly.

"Asks for time. If he sells his stock at present prices, he'll be a heavy loser."

"So let him—say that we'll proceed."

"The writ can't run there, he lives in Mayo."

"We'll try it."

"We did so before, and the sub-sheriff was shot."

"Attorneys are plenty—we'll send down another."

"Hump!" muttered Joe, as he turned over a folio of papers before him. "Ay, here it is," said he. "Oliver Moore wishes to go to America, and will give up his lease; he only begs that you will vouchsafe to him some small compensation——"

"Compensation! That word is one of yours, Mr. Raper, and I've no doubt has a classical origin—you got it in Homer, perhaps; but, let me tell you, sir, that it is a piece of vulgar

cant, and, what is worse, a swindle! Ay, grow pale if you like: but I'll repeat the word—a swindle! When a man wants to sell a pair of old boots, does he think of charging for all the blacking he has put on them for the three years before? And yet that is precisely what you dignify with the name of compensation. Tell him if he built a house, that he lived in it; if he fenced the land, that the neighbours' cattle made fewer trespasses; if he drained, the soil was the drier. Your cry of compensation won't do, Raper. I might as well ask an insurance office to pay me for taking care of my health, and give me a bonus whenever I took castor oil!"

"The cases are not alike, sir. If his improvements be of a permanent character——"

"Is this an office, Mister Raper, or is it a debating society?" broke in Fagan. "My answer to Moore is, pay, and go—to the devil if he likes."

"Sir Harry Wheeler," continued Joe, "writes from Cheltenham, that he thinks there must be a mistake about the bill for three hundred and forty odd—that it was included in the bond he gave in September last."

"File a bill, send for Crowther, and let him proceed against him."

"But I think he's right, sir; the memorandum is somewhere here. I put it amongst the W's; for we have no box for Sir Harry."

"It's a nice way to keep accounts, Mister Raper; I must say it's very creditable to you," said Fagan; who, when any inaccuracy occurred, always reproached Joe with the system that he rigidly compelled him to follow. "Perhaps it's classical, however; maybe it's the way the ancients did it! But I'll tell you what, sir—you'd cut an ugly figure before the courts if you came to be examined; your Latin and Greek wouldn't screen you there."

"Here it is—here's the note," said Joe, who had all the while been prosecuting his search. "It's in your own hand, and mentions that this sum forms a portion of the debt now satisfied by his bond."

"Cancel the bill and tell him so. What's that letter, yonder?"

"It is marked 'strictly private and confidential,' sir; but comes from Walter Carew, Esq."

"Then, why not give it to me at once?—why keep pottering about every trifle of no moment, sir?" said Fagan, as he broke the seal, and drew near to the window to read. It was very brief, and ran thus:—

"DEAR FAGAN,—Shylock couldn't hold a candle to you—such an infernal mess of interest, compound interest, costs, and commission, as you have sent me, I never beheld! However, for the present, I must endure all your exactions, even to the tune of fifty per cent. Let me have cash for the enclosed three bills, for one thousand each, drawn at the old dates, and, of course, to be 'done' at the old discount.

"I have just taken a wife, and am in want of ready money to buy some of the customary tomfooleries of the occasion. Regards to Polly and her fat terrier.—Yours in haste.

"WALTER CAREW."

"Read that," said Fagan, handing the letter to his clerk, while the veins in his forehead swelled out with passion, and his utterance grew hoarse and thick.

Raper carefully perused the note, and then proceeded to examine the bills, when Fagan snatched them rudely from his hand.

"It was his letter I bade you read—the gross insolence of his manner of addressing me. Where's his account, Raper? How does he stand with us?"

"That's a long affair to make out," said Joe, untying a thick roll of papers.

"I don't want details. Can you never understand that? Tell me in three words how he stands."

"Deeply indebted—very deeply indebted, sir," said Joe, poring over the papers.

"Tell Crowther to come over this evening at six o'clock, and write to Carew by this post, thus:—

"'Mr. Fagan regrets that in the precarious condition of the money market, he is obliged to return you the bills, herewith enclosed, without acceptance. Mr. F., having some large and pressing claims to meet, desires to call your attention to the accompanying memorandum, and to ask at what early period it will be your convenience to make an arrangement for its settlement.'

"Make out an account and furnish it, Raper; we'll see how he relishes Shylock when he comes to read that."

Joseph sat with the pen in his hand as if deep in thought.

"Do you hear me, Raper?" asked Fagan, in a harsh voice.

"I do," said the other, and proceeded to write.

"There's a judgment entered upon Carew's bond of February— isn't there?"

"There is! Crowther has it in his office."

"That's right. We'll see and give him a pleasant honeymoon." And with these words, uttered with an almost savage malevolence, he passed out into the street.

Joe Raper's daily life was a path on which the sunlight seldom fell; but this day it seemed even darker than usual, and as he sat and wrote, many a heavy sigh broke from him, and more than once did he lay down his pen and draw his hand across his eyes. Still he laboured on, his head bent down over his desk, in that selfsame spot where he had spent his youth, and was now dropping down into age unnoticed and unthought of. Of those who came and went from that dreary room, who saw and spoke with him, how many were there who knew him—who even suspected what lay beneath that simple exterior! To some he was but the messenger of dark tidings, the agent of those severe measures which Fagan not unfrequently employed against his clients. To others he seemed a cold, impassive, almost misanthropic being, without a tie to bind him to his fellow-man; while not a few even ascribed to his influences all the harshness of the "Grinder." It is more than likely that he never knew of—never suspected the different judgments thus passed on him. So humbly did he think of himself—so little disposed was he to fancy that he could be an object of attention to any, the chances are that he was spared this source of mortification. Humility was the basis of his whole character, and by its working was every action of his simple life influenced. It might be a curious subject of inquiry how far this characteristic was fashioned by his habits of reading and of thought. Holding scarcely any intercourse with the world of society—companionless as he was, his associates were the great writers of ancient or modern times—the mighty spirits whose vast conceptions have created a world of their own. Living amongst them—animated by their glorious sentiments—feeling their thoughts—breathing their words—how natural that he should have fallen back upon himself with a profound sense of his inferiority! How meanly must he have thought of his whole career in life in presence of such standards!

Upon this day Joe never once opened a book; the little volumes which lay scattered through his drawers were untouched, nor did he, as was his wont, turn for an instant to refresh himself in the loved pages of Metastasio, or of Uhland. Whenever he had more than usual on hands, it was his custom not to dine with the family, but to eat something as he sat at his desk. Such was his meal now—a little bread and cheese, washed down by a glass of water.

"Miss Polly hopes you'll take a glass of wine, Mr. Joe," said a maid-servant, as she appeared with a decanter in her hand.

"No! Thanks—thanks to Miss Polly; many thanks—and to you, Margaret—not to-day. I have a good deal to do." And he resumed his work with that air of determination the girl well knew brooked no interruption.

It was full an hour after sunset when he ceased writing; and then, laying his head down between his hands, he slept—the sound, heavy sleep that comes of weariness. Twice or thrice had the servant to call him before he could awake, and hear that "Miss Polly was waiting tea for him."

"Waiting for me," cried he, in mingled shame and astonishment. "How forgetful I am—how very wrong of me! Is Mr. Crowther here, Margaret?"

"He came an hour ago, sir."

"Dear me, how I have forgotten myself!" And he began gathering up his papers, the hard task of the day, in all haste. "Say I'm coming, Margaret—tell Miss Polly I'm so sorry." And thus, with many an excuse, and in great confusion, Raper hurried out of the office, and upstairs into the drawing-room.

Fagan's house was, perhaps, the oldest in the street, and was remarkable for possessing one of those quaint, old-fashioned windows, which, projecting over the door beneath, formed a species of little boudoir, with views extending on either side. Here it was Polly's pleasure to sit, and here she now presided at her tea-table; while in a remote corner of the room her father and Mr. Crowther were deep in conversation.

"Have you finished the statement?—where's the account?" cried Fagan, roughly interrupting the excuses that Raper was making for his absence.

"Here it is; at least so far as I was able to make it. Many of our memoranda, however, only refer to verbal arrangements, and allude to business matters transacted personally between you and Mr. Carew."

"Listen to him, Crowther; just hear what he says," said Fagan, angrily. "Is not that a satisfactory way to keep accounts?"

"Gently, gently—let us go quietly to work," said Crowther—a large, fat, unyielding man, with a bloated, red face, and an utterance rendered difficult from the combined effects of asthma and over-eating. "Raper is generally most correct, and your own memory is admirable. If Miss Polly will give me a cup of her strongest tea, without any sugar, I'll answer for it I'll soon see my way."

When Raper had deposited the mass of papers on the table, and presented the cup of tea to Crowther, he stole, half timidly, over to where Polly sat.

"You must be hungry, Papa Joe"—it was the name by which she called him in infancy—"for you never appeared at dinner. Pray eat something now."

"I have no appetite, Polly; that is, I have eaten already. I'm quite refreshed," said he, scarcely thinking of what he said, for his eyes were directed to the table where Crowther was seated, and where a kind of supercilious smile on the attorney's face seemed evoked by something in the papers before him.

"Some cursed folly of his own—some of that blundering nonsense that he fills his brains with!" cried Fagan, as he threw indignantly away a closely-written sheet of paper, the lines of which unmistakably proclaimed verse.

Joe eyed the unhappy document wistfully for a second or two, and then, with a stealthy step, he crept over, and threw it into the hearth.

"I found out the passage, Polly," said he, in a whisper, so as not to disturb the serious conference of the others; and he drew a few well-thumbed leaves from his pocket, and placed them beside her, while she bent over them, till her glossy ringlets touched the page.

"This is the Medea," said she; "but we have not read that yet."

"No, Polly; you remember that we kept it for the winter nights—we agreed Tieck and Chamisso were better for summer evenings—'Quando ridono i prati,' as Petrarch says;" and her eyes brightened, and her cheek glowed as he spoke. "How beautiful was that walk we took on Sunday evening last—that little glen beside the river, so silent, so still, who could think it within a mile or two of a great city? What a delightful thing it is to think, Polly, that they who labour hard in the week—and there are so many of them!—can yet on that one day of rest wander forth and taste of the earth's freshness.

"'L' oro e le perle—i fior vermegli ed i bianchi.'"

"Confound your balderdash!" cried Fagan, passionately; "you've put me out in the tot—seventeen and twelve, twenty-nine—two thousand nine hundred pounds, with the accruing interest. I don't see that he has added the interest."

Mr. Crowther bent patiently over the document for a few minutes, and then, taking off his spectacles, and wiping them

slowly, said, in his blindest voice—"It appears to me that Mr. Raper has omitted to calculate the interest. Perhaps he would kindly vouchsafe us his attention for a moment."

Raper was, however, at that moment deaf to all such appeals; his spirit was as though wandering free beneath the shade of leafy bowers, or along the sedgy banks of some clear lake.

"You remember Dante's lines, Polly; and how he describes—

" 'La divina foresta—
Che agli occhi temperava il nuovo giorno,
Senza piu aspettar lasciai la riva,
Prendendo la campagna lento lento.'

How beautiful the repetition of the word 'lento;' how it conveys the slow reluctance of his step.

"There is, to my thinking, even a more graceful instance in Metastasio," said Polly—

" 'L' onda che mormora,
Fra sponda e sponda,
L' aura che tremola,
Fra fronda e fronda.'

"Raper, Raper—do you hear me, I say?" cried Fagan, as he knocked angrily with his knuckles on the table.

"We are sorry, Miss Fagan," interposed Crowther, "to interrupt such intellectual pleasure; but business has its imperative claims."

"I'm ready—quite ready, sir," said Joe, rising in confusion, and hastening across the room to where the others sat.

"Take a seat, sir," said Fagan, peremptorily; "for here are some points which require full explanation. And I would beg to remind you, that if the cultivation of your mind, as I have heard it called, interferes with your attention to office duties, it would be as well to seek out some more congenial sphere for its development than my humble house. I'm too poor a man for such luxurious dalliance, Mr. Raper." These words, although spoken in a whisper, were audible to him to whom they were addressed, and he heard them in a state of half-stupified amazement. "For the present, I must call your attention to this. What is it?"

Raper was no sooner in the midst of figures and calculations than all his instincts of office-life recalled him to himself, and he began rapidly but clearly to explain the strange and confused-looking documents which were strewn before him, and Crowther could not but feel struck by the admirable memory and systematic precision which alone could derive information

from such disorderly materials. Even Fagan himself was so carried away by a momentary impulse of enthusiasm as to say, "When a man is capable of such a statement as this, what a disgrace that he should fritter away his faculties with rhymes and legends!"

"Mr. Raper is a philosopher, sir; he despises the base pursuits and grovelling ambitions of us lower mortals," said Crowther, with a well-feigned humility.

"We must beg of him to lay aside his philosophy, then, for this evening, for there is much to be done yet," said Fagan, untying a large bundle of letters. "This is the correspondence of the last year—the most important of all."

"Large sums! large sums, these!" said Crowther, glancing his eyes over the papers. "You appear to have placed a most unlimited confidence in this young gentleman—a very well merited trust, I have no doubt."

Fagan made no reply, but a slight contortion of his mouth and eyebrows seemed to offer some dissent to the doctrine.

"I have kept the tea waiting for you, Papa Joe," said Polly, who took the opportunity of a slight pause to address him; and Raper, like an escaped schoolboy, burst away from his task at a word.

"I have just remembered another instance, Polly," said he, "of what we were speaking; it occurs in Schiller—

"Es bricht sich die wellen mit macht—mit macht.'"

"Take your books to your room, Polly," said Fagan, harshly; "for I see that as long as they are here, we have little chance of Mr. Raper's services."

Polly rose, and pressed Joe's hand affectionately, and then, gathering up the volumes before her, she left the room. Raper stood for a second or two gazing at the door after her departure and then, heaving a faint sigh, muttered to himself—

"I have just recalled to mind another—

"‘Eine Blüth’, eine Blüth’ mir brich,
Vom den Baum in Garten.’"

Quite ready, sir," broke he in suddenly, as a sharp summons from Fagan's knuckles once more admonished him of his duty; and, now, as though the link which had bound him to realms of fancy was snapped, he addressed himself to his task with all the patient drudgery of daily habit.

CHAPTER VI.

TWO FRIENDS AND THEIR CONFIDENCES.

By the details of my last two chapters, I have been obliged to recede, as it were, from the due course of my story, and speak of events which occurred prior to those mentioned in a former chapter; but this irregularity was a matter of necessity, since I could not pursue the narrative of my father's life, without introducing to the reader certain characters, who, more or less, exerted an influence on his fortunes. Let me now, however, turn to my tale, from which it is my intention in future to digress as seldom as possible. A few lines, written in haste, had summoned MacNaghten to Castle Carew, on the morning of that Friday for which my father had invited his friends to dinner. With all his waywardness, and all the weaknesses of an impulsive nature, Dan MacNaghten stood higher in my father's esteem than any other of his friends. It was not alone that he had given my father the most signal proofs of his friendship, but that, throughout his whole career, marked as it was by folly and rashness, and the most thoughtless extravagance, he had never done a single action that reflected on his reputation as a man of honour, nor, in all the triumphs of his prosperous days, or in the trials of his adverse ones, had he forfeited the regard of any who knew him. My father had entrusted to him, during his absence, everything that could be done without correspondence; for, amongst Dan's characteristics, none was more remarkable than his horror of letter-writing; and it was a popular saying of the time, "that Dan MacNaghten would rather fight two duels than write one challenge." Of course, it may be imagined how much there was for two such friends to talk over, when they met, for, if my father's letters were few and brief, MacNaghten's were still fewer and less explicit, leaving voids on either side that nothing but a meeting could supply.

Early, therefore, that Friday morning, Dan's gig and mottled grey, the last remnant of an extensive stable establishment, rattled up the avenue of Castle Carew, and MacNaghten strolled into the garden, to loiter about, till such time as my father

might be stirring. He was not many minutes there, however, when my father joined him, and the two friends embraced cordially, and arm-in-arm returned to the house.

It was not without astonishment Dan saw that the breakfast-table was spread in the same little-garden-room which my father always used in his bachelor days, and still more, that only two places were laid.

"You are wondering where's my wife, Dan. She never breakfasts with me; nor indeed, do we see each other till late in the afternoon—a custom, I will own that I used to rebel against at first, but I'm getting more accustomed to it now; and, after all, Dan, it would be a great sacrifice of all her comfort should I insist on a change; so I put up with it as best I can."

"Perhaps she'll see herself, in time, that these are not the habits here."

"Perhaps so," said my father; "but usually French people think their own ways the rule, and all others the exception. I suppose you were surprised at my marriage, Dan."

"Faith I was, I own to you. I thought you one of those inveterate Irishers that couldn't think of anything but Celtic blood. You remember when we were boys, how we used to rave on that theme."

"Very true. Like all the grafts, we deemed ourselves purer than the ancient stock; but no man ever knows when, where, or whom he'll marry. It's all nonsense planning and speculating about it. You might as well look out for a soft spot to fall in a steeple-chase. You come smash down in the very middle of your speculations. I'm sure, as for me, I never dreamed of a wife till I found that I had one."

"I know so well how it all happened," cried Dan, laughing. "You got up one of those delightful intimacies—that pleasant familiar kind of half-at-homishness that throws a man always off his guard, and leaves him open to every assault of female fascination, just when he fancies that he is the delight of the whole circle. Egad, I've had at least half-a-dozen such, and must have been married at least as many times, if somebody hadn't discovered, in the meanwhile, that I was ruined."

"So that you never fell in love in your prosperous days, Dan?"

"Who does—who ever did? The minor that wrote sonnets has only to come of age, and feel that he can indite a check, to be cured of his love fever. Love is a passion most intimately connected with laziness and little money. Give a fellow seven or eight thousand a-year, good health and good spirits, and I'll

back him to do every other folly in Christendom before he thinks of marriage."

"From all of which I am to conclude that you set down this act of mine either as a proof of a weak mind or a failing exchequer," said my father.

"Not in your case," said he, more slowly, and with a greater air of reflection. "You had always a dash of ambition about you; and the chances, are, that you set your affections on one that you half despaired of obtaining, or had really no pretensions to look for. I see, I'm right, Walter," said he, as my father fidgetted, and looked confused. "I could have wagered a thousand on it, if I had as much. You entered for the royal plate; and by Jove! I believe you were right."

"You have not made so bad a guess of it, Dan; but what say the rest? What's the town gossip?"

"Do you not know Dublin as well or better than I do? Can't you frame to a very letter every syllable that has been uttered on the subject—or need I describe to you my Lady Kilfoyle's fan-shaking horror, as she tells of 'that poor dear Carew, and his unfortunate marriage, with Heaven knows whom!' Nor Bob French's astonishment that you, of all men, should marry out of your sphere—or, as he calls it, your spire. Nor how graphically Mrs. Stapleton Harris narrates the manner of your entanglement—how you fought two brothers, and only gave in to the superior force of an outraged mamma, and the tears of your victim! Nor fifty other similar stories, in which you figured alternately as the dupe or the deceived—the only point of agreement being a universal reprobation of one, who, with all his pretensions to patriotism, should have entirely forgotten the claims of Irish manufacture."

"And are they all so severe—so unjust?"

"Very nearly. The only really warm defender I've heard of you, was one from whom you probably least expected it."

"And who might that be?"

"Can't you guess, Watty?"

"Harry Blake—Redmond—George Macartney?"

"Confound it, you don't think I mean a man."

"A woman—who could she be? Not Sally Talbot; not Lady Jane Rivers; not——"

"Kitty Dwyer; and I think you might have guessed her before, Watty! It is rather late, to be sure, to think of it; but my belief is that you ought to have married that girl."

"She refused me, Dan. She refused me," said my father, growing red, between shame and a sense of irritation.

"There's a way of asking that secures a refusal, Watty. Don't tell me Kitty was not fond of you. I ought to know, for she told me so herself."

"She told you so," cried my father, slowly.

"Ay, did she. It was in the summer-house, down yonder. You remember the day you gave a great picnic to the Carbiniers; they were ordered off to India, and you asked them out here to a farewell breakfast. Well, I didn't know then how badly matters were with me. I thought, at least, that I could scrape together some thirteen or fourteen hundreds a-year; and I thought, too, that I had a knowledge of the world, that was worth as much more, and that Kitty Dwyer was just the girl that suited me. She was never out of humour—could ride anything that ever was backed—didn't care what she wore—never known to be sick, sulky, nor sorry for anything; and after a country dance that lasted two hours, and almost killed everybody but ourselves, I took her a walk round the gardens, and seated her in the summer-house there. I needn't tell all I said," continued he, with a sigh. "I believe I couldn't have pleaded harder for my life, if it was at stake; but she stopped me short, and squeezing my hand between both of hers, said—'No, Dan; this cannot be, and you are too generous to ask me why.' But I was not! I pressed her all the more; and, at last—not without seeing a tear in her eye, too—I got at her secret, and heard her say your name. I swore by every saint we could either of us remember, never to tell this to man or mortal living; and I suppose, in strict fact, I oughtn't to do so now; but, of course, it's the same thing as if you were dead, and you, I well know, will never breathe it again."

"Never!" said my father, and sat with his head on his hand, unable to utter a word more.

"Poor Kitty!" said Dan, with a heavy sigh, while he balanced his spoon on the edge of his tea cup! "I half suspect she is the only one in the world that you ever seriously wronged, and yet she is the very first to uphold you."

"But you are unjust, Dan—most unjust," cried my father, warmly. "There was a kind of flirtation between us—I don't deny it, but nothing more than is always going forward in this free-and-easy land of ours, where people play with their feelings as they do with their fortunes, and are quite astonished to discover, some fine morning, that they have fairly run through both one and the other. I liked her, and she perhaps liked me, somewhat better than any one else that she met as often. We

got to become very intimate; to feel, that in the disposal of our leisure hours—which meant the livelong day—we were excessively necessary to each other; in fact, that if our minds were not quite alike, our tastes were. Of course, before one gets that far, one's friends, as they call themselves, have gone far beyond it. There's no need of wearying you with detail. Somebody, I'm sure, I forget who it was, now took occasion to tell me, that I was behaving ill to Kitty; that unless I really intended seriously—that's the paraphrase for marriage—my attentions were calculated to do her injury. Ay, by Jove! your match-making moralists talk of a woman as they would of a horse, and treat a broken flirtation as if it were a breach of warranty. I was, I own it, not a little annoyed at the unnecessary degree of interest my friends insisted on taking in my welfare; but I was not fool enough to go to war with the world single-handed, so I seemed to accept the counsel, and went my way. That same day, I rode out with Kitty. There was a large party of us, but by some chance we found ourselves side by side and in an avenue of the wood. Quite full as my mind was of the communication of the morning, I could not resist my usual impulse, which was to talk to her of any or everything that was uppermost in my thoughts. I don't mean to say, Dan, that I did so delicately, or even becomingly, for I confess to you I had grown into that kind of intimacy whose gravest fault is, that it has no reserve. I'm quite certain that nothing could be worse in point of taste or feeling than what I said. You can judge of it from her reply—'And are you such a fool, Walter, as to cut an old friend for such silly gossip?' I blundered out something in defence of myself—floundered away into all kinds of stupid unmeaning apologies, and ended by asking her to marry me. Up to that moment we were conversing in all the freedom of our old friendship—not the slightest reserve on either side; but no sooner had I uttered these words, than she turned towards me with a look so sad, and so reproachful, I did not believe that her features could have conveyed the expression, while, in a voice of deepest emotion, she said—'Oh, Walter, this from you!' I was brute enough—there's only one word for it—to misunderstand her; and, full of myself, and the splendid offer I had made her, and my confounded *amour propre*, I muttered something about the opinion of the world, the voice of friends, and so on. 'Tell your friends, then,' said she, and with such an emphasis on the word—'tell your friends that I refused you!' and giving her mare a tremendous cut of the whip, she dashed off at speed, and

was up with the others before I had even presence of mind to follow her."

"You behaved devilish badly—infamously. If I'd been her brother, I'd have shot you like a dog!" cried Dan, rising, and walking the room.

"I see it," said my father, covering his face with his handkerchief.

"I am sorry I said that, Watty—I don't mean that," said Dan, laying his hand on my father's shoulder. "It all comes of that infernal system of interference! If they had left you alone, and to the guidance of your own feelings, you'd never have gone wrong. But the world will poke in its d—d finger everywhere. It's rather hard, when good breeding protests against the by-stander meddling with your game at chess, that he should have the privilege of obtruding on the most eventful incident of your existence."

"Let us never speak of this again, Dan," said my father, looking up with eyes that were far from clear.

MacNaghten squeezed his hand, and said nothing.

"What have you been doing with Tony Fagan, Dan?" said my father, suddenly. "Have you drawn too freely on the Grinder, and exhausted the liberal resources of his free-giving nature?"

"Nothing of the kind; he has closed his books against me this many a day. But why do you ask this?"

"Look here!" And he opened a drawer and showed a whole mass of papers, as he spoke. "Fagan, whom I regarded as an undrainable well of the precious metals, threatens to run dry; he sends me back bills unaccepted, and actually menaces me with a reckoning."

"What a rascal, not to be satisfied with forty or fifty per cent."

"He might have charged sixty, Dan, if he would only 'ord' the bill to lie on the table.' But see, he talks of a settlement, and even hints at a lawyer."

"You ought to have married Polly."

"Pray, is there any one else that I should have married, Dan?" cried my father, half angrily; "for it seems to me that you have quite a passion for finding out alliances for me."

"Polly, they say, will have three hundred thousand pounds," said Dan, slowly, "and is a fine girl to boot. I assure you, Watty, I saw her the other day, seated in the library here, and with all the splendour of your stained-glass windows, your gold-fretted ceiling, and your gorgeous tapestries, she looked just in her place.

Hang me, if there was a particle of the picture in better style or taste than herself."

"How came she here?" cried my father in amazement. And MacNaghten now related all the circumstances of Fagan's visit, the breakfast, and the drive.

"And you actually sat with three hundred thousand pounds at your side," said my father, "and did not decamp with it?"

"I never said she had the money in her pocket, Watty. Egad! that would have been a very tempting situation."

"How time must have changed you, Dan, when you could discuss the question thus calmly! I remember the day when you'd have won the race, without even wasting a thought on the solvency of the stakeholder."

"Faith I believe it were the wisest way after all, Watty," said he, carelessly: "but the fact is, in the times you speak of, my conscience, like a generous banker, never refused my drafts; now, however, she has taken a circumspect turn, and I'm never quite certain that I have not overdrawn my account with her. In plain words, I could not bring myself to do with premeditation what once I might have done from recklessness."

"And so the scruple saved Polly?" cried my father.

"Just so; not that I had much time to reflect on it, for the blacks were pulling fearfully, and Dan had smashed his splinter-bar with a kick. Still, in coming up by the new shrubbery there, I did say to myself—'which road shall I take?' The ponies were going to decide the matter for me; but I turned them short round with a jerk and laid the whip over their flanks with a cut—the dearest assuredly I ever gave to horseflesh, for it cost me, in all likelihood, three hundred thousand."

"Who'd have ever thought Dan MacNaghten's conscience would have been so expensive!"

"By Jove, Watty, it's the only thing of value remaining to me. Perhaps my creditors left it on the same polite principle that they allow a respectable bankrupt to keep his snuff-box or his wife's miniature—a cheap complaisance that reads well in the newspapers."

"The Grinder, of course, thought that he had seen the last of you," said my father, laughing.

"He as much as said so to me when I came back. He even went further," said Dan, reddening with anger as he spoke. "He proposed to me to go abroad and travel, and that he would pay the cost; but he'll scarcely repeat the insolence."

"Why, what has come over you all here? I scarcely know you for what I left you some short time back. Dan MacNaghten

taking to scruples and Tony Fagan to generosity, seem, indeed, too much for common credulity! And now as to politics, Dan? What are our friends doing—for I own to you I have not opened one of Bagwell's letters since I left Paris."

"You're just as wise as if you had. Tom has got into all that Rotundo cant about the 'Convention,' and the 'Town Council,' and the 'Sub-Committee of Nine,' so that you'd not make anything out of the correspondence. I believe the truth is, that the Bishop is mad, and they who follow him are fools. The Government at first thought of buying them over, but they now perceive it's a cheaper and safer expedient to leave them to themselves and their own indiscretions. But I detest the subject, and as we'll have nothing else talked of to-day at dinner, I'll cry truce, till then. Let us have a look at the stable, Watty. I want to talk to you about the 'nags.'" And so saying, Mac-Naghten arose from table, and, taking my father's arm, led him away into the garden.



CHAPTER VII.

SHOWING HOW CHANCE IS BETTER THAN DESIGN.

It was not the custom of the day for the lady of the house to present herself at dinner when the party consisted solely of men, so that my mother's absence from table appeared nothing remarkable. To her, however, it did seem somewhat singular that, although she descended to the drawing-room in all the charming elegance of a most becoming costume, not one of the guests presented himself to pay his respects, or, as she would have said, his dutiful homage. It is possible that my father had forgotten to apprise her that the company of a dinner-party were not usually in that temperate and discreet frame of mind which would make their appearance in a drawing-room desirable. In his various lessons, it is more than likely that this escaped him; and I believe I am not far wrong in wishing that many other of his instructions had shared the same fate. The fact was, that

in preparing my mother for the duties and requirements of a novel state of society, he had given her such false and exaggerated notions of the country and the people, she had imbibed a hundred absurd prejudices about them which, had she been left to her own unguided good sense and tact, she would have totally escaped; and while, as he thought, he was storing her mind with a thorough knowledge of Ireland, he was simply presenting her with a terrifying picture of such inconsistency, incongruity, and wrongheadedness, that no cleverness on her part could ever succeed in combatting.

It is perfectly true that the courtly deference and polished reserve of old French manners, its thousand observances, and its unfailing devotion to ladies, were not the striking features of Irish country-house life: but there was a great deal in common between them, and, perhaps, no country of Europe in that day could so easily, and with such little sacrifice, have conformed to the French standard of good breeding as Ireland; and, I have little doubt, that if left to herself, my mother would have soon discovered the points of contact, without even troubling her head or puzzling her ingenuity over their discrepancies. However that may be, there she sat, in all the attractive beauty of full dress, alone and in silence, save when the door of the distant dinner-room opening bore to her ears the wild and vociferous merriment of a party excited by wine and conviviality.

I know not, I can but fancy, what thoughts of her own dear land were hers at that moment—what memory of delicious evenings spent amidst alleys of orange and lime-trees, the rippling fountain mingling its sounds with the more entrancing music of flattery; what visions rose before her of scenes endeared from infancy, of objects that recalled that soft luxurious dalliance which makes of life a dream. I can but imagine that of this kind were her reveries, as she sat in solitude, or slowly paced up and down the immense room which, but partially lighted up, looked even larger than it was. To cut off every clue to her family, my father had sent back from England the maid who accompanied her, and taken in her place one who knew nothing of my mother's birth or connections, so that she had not even the solace of so much confidential intercourse, and was, utterly, completely alone. While in Wales she had been my father's companion for the entire day, accompanying him when he walked or rode, and beside him on the river's bank, as he fished; scarcely had they arrived in Ireland, however, when the whole course of life was changed. The various duties of his

station took up much of his time, he was frequently occupied all the day, and they met but rarely; hence had she adopted those old habits of her native country—that self-indulgent system, which surrounds itself with few cares, fewer duties, and, alas! no resources!

So fearful was my father that she might take a dislike to the country from the first impressions produced upon her by new acquaintances, that he actually avoided every one of his neighbours, hesitating where or with whom to seek companionship for his wife—some were too old, some too vulgar, some were linked with an objectionable “set,” some were of the opposite side in politics. His fastidiousness increased with every day; and while he was assuring her that there was a delightful circle into which she would be received, he was gradually offending every one of his old neighbours and associates. Of the great heap of cards which covered her table, she had not yet seen one of the owners, and already a hundred versions were circulated to account for the seclusion in which she lived.

I have been obliged to burthen my reader with these explanations, for whose especial enlightenment they are intended, for I desire that he should have as clear an idea of the circumstances which attended my mother's position as I am able to convey, and without which he would be probably unjust in his estimate of her character. In all likelihood there is not any one less adapted to solitude than a young, very handsome, and much-flattered French woman. Neither her education nor her tastes fit her for it; and the very qualities which secure her success in society, are precisely those which most contribute to melancholy when alone. Wit and brilliancy, when isolated from the world, being like the gold and silver money which the ship-wrecked sailor would willingly have bartered for the commonest and vilest articles of simple utility.

Let the reader, then, bearing all this in his mind, picture to himself my mother, who, as the night wore on, became more and more impatient, starting at every noise, and watching the door, which she momentarily expected to see open.

During all this time, the company of the dinner-room were in the fullest enjoyment of their conviviality—and let me add, too, of that species of conviviality for which the Ireland of that day was celebrated. It is unhappily too true: those habits of dissipation prevailed to such an extent, that a dinner-party meant an orgie; but it is only fair to remember, that it was not a mere festival of debauch, but that native cleverness and wit

—the able conversationalist—the brilliant talker, and the lively narrator, had no small share in the intoxication of the hour. There was a kind of barbaric grandeur in the Irish country gentleman of the time—with his splendid retinue, his observance of the point of honour, his contempt of law, and his generous hospitality—that made him a very picturesque, if not a very profitable, feature of his native country. The exact period to which I refer was remarkable in this respect: the divisions of politics had risen to all the dignity of a great national question, and the rights of Ireland were then on trial.

It is not my object, perhaps as little would it be the reader's wish, to enter on any description of the table-talk—where debates in the House, duels, curious assize cases, hard runs with fox-hounds, adventures with bailiffs, and affairs of gallantry, all followed pell-mell, in wild succession. None were above telling of their own defeats and discomfitures. There was little of that overweening self-esteem which in our time stifles many a good story, for fear of the racy ridicule that is sure to follow it. Good fellowship and good temper were supreme, and none felt that to be offence which was uttered in all the frank gaiety of the bottle. Even then the western Irishman had his distinctive traits; and while the taste for courtly breeding and polished manners was gradually extending, he took a kind of pride in maintaining his primitive habits of dress and demeanour, and laughed at the new-fangled notions as a fashionable folly that would last its hour and disappear again. Of this school was a certain Mr., or rather, as he was always called, "Old Bob Ffrench," the familiar epithet of Bitter Bob being his cognomen among friends and intimates. I am unwilling to let my readers suppose, even for a moment, that he really deserved the disparaging prefix. He was, indeed, the very emblem of an easy-tempered, generous-hearted old man, the utmost extent of whose bitterness was the coarseness of a manner that, however common in his own country, formed a strong contrast to the tone of the capital. Although a man of a large fortune and ancient family, in his dress and appearance he looked nothing above the class of a comfortable farmer. His large loose brown coat was decorated with immense silver buttons, and his small clothes, disdaining all aid from braces, displayed a liberal margin of linen over his hips; but his stockings were most remarkable of all, being of lamb's wood, and of two colours—a light brown and blue, an invention of his own, to make them easy of detection if stolen, but which assuredly secured their safety on better grounds. He was a member of Parliament

for a western borough; and despite many peculiarities of diction, and an occasional lapse of grammar, was always listened to with attention in the House, and respected for the undeviating honour and manly frankness of his character. Bob had been, as usual, an able contributor to the pleasures of the evening; he had sung, told stories, joked, and quizzed every one around him, and even, in a burst of confidence, communicated the heads of a speech he was about to make in the House on the question of reform, when he suddenly discovered that his snuff-box was empty. Now, amongst his many peculiarities, one was the belief that no man in Ireland knew how to apportion the various kinds of tobacco like himself, and Bob's mixture was a celebrated snuff of the time.

To replenish his box he always carried a little canister in his great-coat pocket, but never would entrust the care of this important casket to a servant; so that when he saw that he was "empty," he quietly stole from the room and went in search of his great coat. It was not without some difficulty that he found his way through the maze of rooms and corridors to the antechamber where he had deposited his hat and coat. Having found it at last, however, he set out to retrace his steps; but whether it was that the fresh air of the cool galleries, or the walking, or that the wine was only then producing its effects, certain is it Mr. Ffrench's faculties became wonderfully confused. He thought he remembered a certain door; but, to his misery, there were at least half-a-dozen exactly like it; he knew that he turned off into a passage, but passages and corridors opened on all sides of him. How heartily did he curse the architect that could not build a house like all the world, with a big hall, having the drawing-room to the left and the dinner-room to the right—an easy geography that any one could recollect after dinner as well as before. With many a malediction on all new-fangled notions, he plodded on, occasionally coming to the end of an impassable gallery, or now straying into rooms in total darkness. "A blessed way to be spending the evening," muttered he to himself; "and maybe, these rascals are quizzing me all this time." Though he frequently stopped to listen, he never could catch the sounds of a conviviality that he well knew was little measured, and hence he opined, that he must have wandered far away from the right track. In the semi-desperation of the moment, he would gladly have made his escape by a window, and trusted to his chance of discovering the hall door, but unfortunately the artifices of a modern window-bolt so completely defied his skill, that even this re-

source was denied him. "I'll take one 'cast' more," muttered he, "and if that fails, I'll lie down on the first snug place I can find till morning." It became soon evident to him that he had, at least, entered new precincts; for he now found himself in a large corridor, splendidly lighted, and with a rich carpeting on the floor. There were several doors on either side, but although he tried them each in turn, they were all locked. At last he came to a door at the extreme end of the gallery, which opened to his hand, and admitted him into a spacious and magnificently furnished apartment, partially lit up, and by this deceptive light admitting glimpses of the most rare and costly objects of china, glass, and marble. It needed not the poetizing effects of claret to make Bob fancy that this was a fairy palace—but perhaps the last bottle contributed to this effect—for he certainly stood amazed and confounded at a degree of magnificence and splendour with which he had never seen anything to compare. Vainly endeavouring to peer through the dubious half-light, and see into the remote distance of the chamber, Ffrench reached the middle of the room, when he heard, or thought he heard, the rustling sounds of silk. It was in the days of hoops and ample petticoats. He turned abruptly, and there stood directly in front of what, in his own description, he characterized as "the elegantest crayture ye ever set eyes upon." Young, beautiful, and most becomingly dressed, it is no wonder if my mother did produce a most entrancing effect on his astounded senses. Never for a moment suspecting that his presence was the result of an accident, my mother curtsied very low, and with a voice and a smile of ineffable sweetness, addressed him. Alas! poor Bob's mystifications were not to end here, for she spoke in French, and however distinguished the City of the Tribes might be in many respects, that language was but little cultivated there. He could, therefore, only bow and lay his hand on his heart, and look as much devotion, respect, and admiration as it was in his power to express at that late hour of the evening.

"Perhaps you'll accept of a cup of tea?" said she at length, leading the way towards the table; and as Ffrench said afterwards, that he never declined drink, no matter what the liquor, he readily consented, and took his place beside her on the sofa. Full of all my father's lessons and precepts about the civilities she was to bestow on the Irish gentlemen and their wives, the importance of creating the most favourable impression on them, and ingratiating herself into their esteem, my mother addressed herself to the task in right earnest. Her first care was to

become intelligible, and she accordingly spoke in the slowest and most measured manner, so as to give the foreigner every possible facility to follow her. Her second was to impose as little necessity on her companion for reply as it was possible. She accordingly talked on of Ireland, of the capital, the country, the scenery about them, the peasantry—everything in short that she could think of, and always in a tone of praise and admiration. The single monosyllable “oui” was the whole stock of old Bob’s French, but, as he often remarked, “we hear of a man walking from Ballinasloe to Dublin with only tu’pence in his pocket, and I don’t see why he should not be able to economise his parts of speech like his pence, and travel through the French dictionary with only one word of it!” Bob’s “oui” was uttered, it is true, with every possible variety of tone and expression. It was assent, conviction, surprise, astonishment, doubt, and satisfaction, just as he uttered it. So long debarred from all intercourse with strangers, it is not improbable that my mother was perfectly satisfied with one who gave her the lion’s share of the conversation. She certainly seemed to ask for no higher efforts at agreeability than the attention he bestowed, and he often confessed that he could have sat for a twelvemonth listening to her, and fancying to himself all the sweet things that he hoped she was saying to him. Doubtless not ignorant of her success, she was determined to achieve a complete victory, for after upwards of an hour speaking in this manner, she asked him if he liked music. Should she sing for him? The “oui” was of course ready, and without further preface she arose and walked over to the pianoforte. The fascination which was but begun before was now completed, for, however weak his appreciation of her conversational ability, he could, like nearly all his countrymen, feel the most intense delight in music. It was fortunate, too, that the tastes of that day did not rise beyond those light “chansonnettes,” those simple melodies which are so easy to execute, that they are within the appreciation of the least educated ears.

Had the incident occurred in our own day, the chances are that some passionate scene from Verdi, or some energetic outburst of despised love or betrayed affection from Donizetti or Meyerbeer, had been the choice, and poor Bob had gone away with a lamentable opinion of musical science, and regret for the days when “singing was preferred to screeching.” Happily the ballad was more in vogue then than the bravura, and instead of holding his ears with his hands, Bob felt them tremble with

ecstasy as he listened. Enjoying thoroughly a praise so heartily accorded, my mother sung on, song after song—now some bold “romance” of chivalry—now some graceful little air of pastoral simplicity. No matter what the theme, the charm of the singer was over him, and he listened in perfect rapture! There is no saying to what pitch of enthusiasm he might have soared, had he felt the fascination of the words as he appreciated the flood of melody. As it was, so completely was he carried away by his emotions, that in a rapture of admiration and delight he threw himself on his knees, and seizing her hand, covered it with kisses.

“You’re an angel; you’re the loveliest, sweetest, and most enchanting creature——” He had got thus far in his rhapsody when my father entered the room, and throwing himself into a chair, laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks.

“Bob! Bob!” cried he, “is this quite fair, I say?” And the old man, at once alive to the bantering and ridicule to which his adventure would expose him, got slowly up and resumed his seat with a most ludicrous expression of shame on his features.

“There is no necessity of introducing one of my oldest friends to you, Josephine,” said my father. “He has already done so without my intervention, and, I must say, he seems to have lost no time in pushing the acquaintance.”

“He is quite charming,” said my mother. “We had an old Marquis de Villebois so like him, and he was the delight of our neighbourhood in Provence.”

“I see what it is now,” muttered Ffrench, “you are cutting me up between you; but I deserve it well. I was an old fool—I am ashamed of myself.”

“Are you going away?” cried my mother.

“What is she saying?” asked he.

“She asks if you have really the heart to leave her,” rejoined my father, laughing.

“Beggad you may laugh now, Watty,” replied he, in a half angry tone; “but I tell you what it is, you’d neither be so ready with your fun, nor so willing to play interpreter, if old Bob was the same man he was five-and-thirty years ago! No ma’am, he would not,” added he, addressing my mother. “But maybe, after all, it’s a greater triumph for you to turn an old head than a young one.”

He hurried away after this; and although my father followed him, and did all in his power to make him join his companions at table, it was in vain; he insisted on going to his room, probably too full of the pleasant vision he had witnessed to



"He threw himself on his knees, and seizing her hand, covered it with kisses."

destroy the illusion by the noisy merriment of a drinking party.

Trivial as the event was in itself, it was not without its consequences. Bob Ffrench had spread the fame of my mother's beauty and accomplishments over Dublin before the following week closed, and nothing else was talked of in the society of the capital. My father, seeing that all further reserve on his part was out of the question, and being satisfied besides that my mother had acquitted herself most successfully in a case of more than ordinary difficulty, resolved on leaving the rest to fortune.

From all that I have ever heard of the society of the time, and from what has reached me by description of my mother's manner and deportment, I am fully convinced that she was exactly the person to attain an immense popularity with all classes. The natural freshness and gaiety of her character, aided by beauty, and the graceful duties of a hostess—which she seemed to fill as by an instinct—made her the object of universal admiration, a homage which, I believe, it was not difficult to see was even more pleasing to my father than to herself.

Castle Carew was from this time crowded with visitors, who, strangely enough, represented the most opposite sections of politics and party. My father's absence during some of the most exciting sessions of parliamentary life, had invested him with a species of neutrality, that made his house an open territory for men of all shades of opinion; and he was but too glad to avail himself of the privilege to form acquaintance with the most distinguished leaders of opposite sections of the House; and here were now met the Castle officials, the chiefs of Opposition, the violent antagonists of debate, not sorry, perhaps, for even this momentary truce in the strife and conflict of a great political campaign.



CHAPTER VIII.

A STATE TRUMPETER.

THE 27th of May, 1782, was the day on which Parliament was to assemble in Dublin, and under circumstances of more than ordinary interest. The great question of the independence of the Irish Legislature was then to be discussed and determined; and never was the national mind so profoundly excited as when that time drew near. They who have only known Ireland in a later period, when her political convulsions have degenerated into low sectarian disputes—irregular irruptions, headed by men of inferior ability, and stimulated solely by personal considerations—can scarcely form any idea of Dublin in the days of the Volunteers. It was not alone that the Court of the Viceroy was unusually splendid, or that the presence of the Parliament crowded the capital with all the country could boast of wealth, station, and influence; but that the pomp and parade of a powerful army added brilliancy and grandeur to a spectacle which, for the magnitude of the interests at stake, and the genius and capacity of those that controlled them, had not its superior in Europe.

The position of England at the moment was pregnant with anxiety; at war with two powerful nations, she had more than ever reason to conciliate the feelings and consult the wishes of Ireland. The modern theory of English necessity being Irish opportunity, had not the same prevalence then as in our own day, but still it had some followers, not one of whom more profoundly believed the adage, or was more prepared to stake fortune on the issue, than our acquaintance, Anthony Fagan.

If the Grinder was not possessed of very sage and statesmanlike opinions on politics generally, he was, on Irish questions, fully as far advanced as the patriots of our own time; his creed of "Ireland for the Irish" comprising every article of his political belief, with this advantage over modern patriotism, that he was immensely rich, and quite ready to employ his wealth in the furtherance of his conviction. He was no needy adventurer, seeking, as the price of a parliamentary display, the

position to which mere professional attainments would never have raised him ; but a hard-working, slow-thinking, determined man, stimulated by the ambition that is associated with great riches, and stung by the degradation of low birth and proscribed religion.

Such men are dangerous in proportion as they are single-minded. Fagan, with all his sincerity of purpose, failed in this respect, for he was passionate and resentful to an extent which made him often forget everything else but his desire of a personal reparation. This was his great fault, and, strange enough, too, he knew it. The working of that failing, and his iron efforts to control it, made up the whole character of the man.

The gross corruption which characterised a late period of Irish history was then comparatively unknown. It is very possible that had it been attempted, its success had been very inferior to that it was destined to obtain subsequently, for the whole tone of public feeling was higher and purer. Public men were both more independent in property, as well as principle, and no distinction of talent or capacity could have dispensed with the greater gifts of honesty and good faith. If there were not venality and low ambition, however, to work upon, there were other national traits no less open to the seductive arts of a crafty administration. There was a warm-hearted and generous confidence, and a gratitude that actually accepted a pledge, and acknowledged it for performance. These were weaknesses not likely to escape the shrewd perception of party, and, to the utmost, were they profited by. The great game of the government was to sow, if not dissension, at least distrust, in the ranks of the national party—to chill the ardour of patriotism, and, wherever possible, to excite different views, and different roads to success, amongst the popular leaders of the time. There came a day, when corruption only asked to see a man's rent-roll, and the list of his mortgages, when his price could be estimated as easily as an actuary can calculate an annuity, when given the age and the circumstances of the individual. Then, however, the investigation demanded nicer and more delicate treatment, for the question was, the more subtle one of the mixed and often discordant motives of the human heart.

The Duke of Portland was well calculated to carry out a policy of this kind, but I am far from suspecting that he was himself fully aware of the drama in which he acted. He was a plain, straightforward man, of average good sense, but more than average firmness and determination. He came over to

Ireland thoroughly impressed with the favourite English maxim, that whatever Irishmen wish is assuredly bad for them, and thought, like the old physicians of the sixteenth century, that a patient's benefit was in the exact proportion to his repugnance for the remedy. I am not quite sure that this pleasant theory is not even yet the favourite one, as regards Ireland, which, perhaps, after all, might be permitted the privilege so generally accorded to the incurable, to take a little medicine of her own prescribing. Be this as it may, I am convinced that the Duke of Portland was no hypocrite, but firmly believed in the efficacy of the system he advocated, and only made use of the blandishments and hospitalities of his station to facilitate connections which he trusted would at last be concurred in on the unerring grounds of reason and judgment. Whatever people may say or think to the contrary, hypocrisy—that is, a really well-sustained and long-maintained hypocrisy—is one of the rarest things to be met with, and might even be suspected never to exist at all, since that the qualities and gifts necessary, or indeed indispensable, to its attainment are exactly of an order which bespeaks some of the first and greatest traits of human nature, and for that reason would make the game of dissimulation impossible; and I would be as slow to believe that a man could search the heart, study the passions, weigh the motives, and balance the impulses of his fellow men, for mere purposes of trick or deception, as that a doctor would devote years of toil and labour in his art for the sole aim of poisoning and destroying his patients.

Few men out of the lists of party took so great an interest in the great struggle as Tony Fagan. With the success of the patriotic side his own ambitions were intimately involved. It was not the section of great wealth, and there was no saying to what eminence a man of his affluence might attain amongst them. He not only kept a registry of all the members, with their peculiar leanings and party connections annexed to it, but he carefully noted down any circumstance likely to influence the vote or sway the motives of the principal leaders of the people. His sources of information were considerable, and penetrated every class of society, from the high world of Dublin, down to the lowest resorts of the rabble. The needy gentleman, hard pressed for resources, found his dealings with the Grinder wonderfully facilitated by any little communication of back-stairs doings at the Castle, or the secrets of the chief secretary's office; while the humble ballad-singer of the streets, or the ragged newsman, were equally certain of a "tester,"

could they only supply some passing incident that bore upon the relations of party.

If not one of the most brilliant, certainly one of the most assiduous, of Fagan's emissaries, was a certain Samuel Cotterell—a man who held the high and responsible dignity of state trumpeter in the Irish Court. He was a large, fine-looking, though somewhat over-corpulent, personage, with a most imposing dignity of air, and a calm self-possession of manner that well became his functions. Perhaps this was natural to him; but some of it may well be attributed to his sense of the dignity of one who only appeared in public on the very greatest occasions, and was himself the herald of a splendid ceremonial.

From long association with the Viceregal Court, he had grown to believe himself a part, and by no means an insignificant part, of the Government; and spoke of himself as of one mysteriously but intimately mixed up in all the acts of the State. The pretentious absurdity, the overweening vanity, of the man, which afforded so much amusement to others, gave no pleasure to Fagan—they rather vexed and irritated him; but these were feelings that he cautiously concealed, for he well knew the touchy and irritable nature of the man, and that whatever little information could be derived from him was only come-at-able by indulging his vein of self-esteem.

It had been for years his custom to pay a visit to Fagan on the eve of any great solemnity, and he was snugly installed in the little bow-window on the evening of the 26th May, with a goodly array of glasses, and a very formidable square decanter of whisky on a table in front of him. Fagan, who never could trust to the indiscreet propensity of Polly to "quizz" his distinguished friend, had sent her to spend the day in the country with some acquaintances; Raper was deep in a difficult passage of Richter, in his own chamber; so that the Grinder was free to communicate with the great official unmolested and undisturbed.

Most men carry into private life some little trait or habit of their professional career. The lawyer is apt to be pert, interrogative and dictatorial; the doctor generally distils the tiresomeness of the patient in his own conversation; the soldier is proverbially pipe-clay; and so, perhaps, we may forgive our friend Cotterell, if his voice, in speaking, seemed to emulate the proud notes of his favourite instrument; while his utterance came in short, broken, abrupt bursts—faint, but faithful imitations of his brazen performances in public. He was naturally not given

to talking, so that it is more than probable the habit of *staccato* was, in itself, a great relief to him.

I will not pretend to say that Fagan's patience was not sorely tried, as well by the matter as the manner of his friend. His pursuit of politics was, indeed, under the greatest of difficulties; but he laboured on, and, like some patient gold-seeker, was satisfied to wash the sand for hours, rewarded with even a few grains of the precious metal at the end of his toil.

"Help yourself, Sam. That's the poteen—this here is Kinahan," said the Grinder, who well knew that until the finish of the third tumbler, Mr. Cotterell's oracle gave no sound. "Help yourself, and remember you'll have a fatiguing day to-morrow!"

"A great day—say rather a great day for Ireland," tolled out the trumpeter.

"That's to be seen," replied Fagan, caustically. "I have witnessed a good many of those great days for Ireland, but I'd be sorely puzzled to say what has come of them."

"There are three great days for Ireland every year. There's the opening, one; the King's, two; St. Patrick's, three——"

"I know all that," muttered Tony, discontentedly.

"St. Patrick's, three; and a collar day!" repeated Sam, solemnly.

"Collars, and curs to wear them," growled out Tony under his breath.

"Ay, a collar day!" and he raised his eyes with a half devotional expression at these imposing words.

"The Duke will open Parliament in person?" asked Fagan, as a kind of suggestive hint, which chanced to turn the talk.

"So we mean, sir—we have always done so. Procession to form in the Upper Castle Yard at twelve—battle-axes in full dress—Ulster in his tabard!"

"Yes—yes; I have seen it over and over again," sighed Fagan, wearily.

"Sounds of trumpet in the court—flourish!"

"Flourish, indeed!" sighed Tony: "it's the only thing does flourish in poor Ireland. Tell me, Sam, has the Court been brilliant lately?"

"We gave two dinners last week—plain dress—bags and swords!"

"And who were the company?"

"Loftus, Lodge, and Morris, Skeffington, Langrishe, and others—Boyle Roche, the Usher-in-waiting. On Friday, we had Rowley, Charlemont——"

"Lord Charlemont! did he dine with the Viceroy on Friday last?"

"Yes, sir; and it was the first time we have asked him since the Mutiny Bill!"

"This is, indeed, strange, Sam; I scarcely thought he was on such terms with the Court!"

"We forgive and forget, sir—we forgive and forget," said Sam, waving his hand with dignity.

"There was young Carew, also."

"Walter Carew, the member for Wicklow?"

"The same—took in Lady Charlotte Carteret—sat next to her Grace, and spoken to frequently—French wife—much noticed!"

"Is he one of the new converts, then?" asked Fag n, slowly; "is he about to change the colour of his coat?"

"A deep claret with diamond buttons, jabot and ruffles, Mechlin lace——"

"And the Duke, you say, spoke much with him?"

"Repeatedly."

"They talked of politics?"

"We talked of everything."

"And in terms of agreement, too?"

"Not about artichokes. Carew likes them in oil, we always prefer butter."

"That is a most important difference of opinion," said Tony, with a sneer.

"We thought nothing of it," said the other, with an air of dignity; "for shortly after, we accepted an invitation to go down to Castle Carew for a week."

"To spend a week at Castle Carew?"

"A half state visit."

"With all the tag-rag and bob-tail of a Court—the lazy drones of pageantry—the men of painted coats and patched characters, the women painted to, but beyond the heart of patching for a reputation."

"No; in half state," replied Cotterell, calmly, and not either heeding or attending to this passionate outburst; "two aides-de-camp; Mr. Barrold, private secretary; Sir George Gore, and about thirty servants."

"Thirty thieves in state livery—thirty bandits in silk stockings and powder!"

"We have made mutual concessions, and shall, I doubt not, be good friends," continued Sam, only thinking of what he said himself. "Carew is to give our state policy a fair trial and we

are to taste the artichokes with oil. His Grace proposed the contract, and then proposed the visit."

A deep groan of angry indignation was all that Tony could utter in reply. "And this same visit," said he, at last, "when is it to take place?"

"Next week; for the present we have much on our hands. We open Parliament to-morrow; Wednesday, grand dinner to peers and peeresses; Thursday, the judges and law officers; Friday, debate on the address—small party of friends; Saturday we go to the play in state—we like the play."

"You do—do you?" said the Grinder, with a grin of malice, as some vindictive feeling worked within him.

"We have commanded 'The Road to Ruin,'" continued Cotterell.

"Out of compliment to your politics, I suppose?"

"Holman's Young Rapid always amused us!"

"Carew's performance of the character is better still—it is real; it is palpable." Then, suddenly carried beyond himself by a burst of passion, he cried—"Now, is it possible that your heavy browed Duke fancies a country can be ruled in this wise? Does he believe that a little flattery here, a little bribery there, some calumny to separate friends, some gossip to sow dissension amongst intimates, a promise of place, a title or a pension thrown to the hungry hounds that yelp, and bark, and fawn about a Court—that this means government, or that these men are the nation?"

"You have overturned the sugar-bowl," observed Cotterell.

"Better than to upset the country," said the other, with a contemptuous look at his stolid companion. "I tell you what it is, Cotterell," added he, gravely; "these English had might and power on their side, and had they rested their strength on them they might defy us, for we are the weaker party; but they have condescended to try other weapons, and would encounter us with subtlety, intrigue, and cabal. Now, mark my words—we may not live to see it—but the time will come when their scheme will recoil upon themselves; for we are their equals—ay, more than their equals with such arms as these! Fools that they are, not to see that if they destroy the influence of the higher classes, the people will elect leaders from their own ranks; and, instead of having to fight Popery alone, the day is not distant when they'll have to combat democracy too. Will not the tune be changed then?"

"It must always be 'God save the King,' sir, on birthdays,"

said Cotterell; who was satisfied if he either caught or comprehended the last words of any discourse.

It is difficult to say whether the Grinder's temper could have much longer endured these assaults of stupidity, but for the sudden appearance of Raper, who, coming stealthily forward, whispered a few words in Fagan's ear.

"Did you say here?—here?" asked Fagan, eagerly.

"Yes, sir," replied Raper; "below in the office."

"But why there? Why not show him up-stairs? No, no, you're right," added he, with a most explanatory glance towards his guest. "I must leave you for a few minutes, Cotterell. Take care of yourself till I come back;" and with this apology he arose, and followed Raper down-stairs.

The visitor, who sat on one of the high office-stools, dressed in the first fashion of the day, slapped his boot impatiently with his cane, and did not even remove his hat as Fagan entered, contenting himself with a slight touch of the finger to its leaf for salutation.

"Sorry to disturb you, Fagan," said he, half cavalierly, "but being in town late this evening, and knowing the value of even five minutes' personal intercourse, I have dropped in to say—what I have so often said in the same place—I want money."

"Grieved to hear it, Mr. Carew," was the grave, sententious reply.

"I don't believe you, Tony. When a man can lend, as you can, on his own terms, he's never very sorry to hear of the occasion for his services."

"Cash is scarce, sir."

"So I have always found it, Tony; but, like everything else, one gets it by paying for. I'm willing to do so, and now, what's the rate; ten, fifteen, or are you Patriarch enough to need twenty per cent.?"

"I'm not sure that I could oblige you, even on such terms, Mr. Carew. There is a long, outstanding, unsettled account between us. There is a very considerable balance due to me; there are, in fact, dealings between us, which call for a speedy arrangement."

"And which are very unlikely to be favoured with it, Tony. Now, I haven't a great deal of time to throw away, for I'm off to the country to-night, so that, pray let us understand each other at once. I shall need, before Monday next, a sum of not less than eight thousand pounds. Hacket, my man of law, will show you such securities as I possess. Call on him, and take

your choice of them. I desire that our negotiation should be strictly a matter between ourselves, because we live in gossiping times, and I don't care to amuse the town with my private affairs. Are you satisfied with this ? ”

“ Eight thousand, in bills, of course, sir ? ”

“ If you wish it ! ”

“ At what dates ? ”

“ The longer the better. ”

“ Shall we say in two sums of four thousand each ; six months, and nine ? ”

“ With all my heart. When can I touch the coin ? ”

“ Now, sir—this moment if you desire it. ”

“ Write the check, then, Tony, ” said he, hurriedly.

“ There, sir, there are the bills for your signature, ” said Fagan. “ Will you have the goodness to give me a line to Hacket about the securities ? ”

“ Of course, ” said he ; and he at once wrote the note required.

“ Now for another point, Tony ; I am going to ask a favour of you. Are you in a gracious mood this evening ? ”

The appeal was sudden enough to be disconcerting, and so Fagan felt it, for he looked embarrassed and confused in no ordinary degree.

“ Come, I see I shall not be refused, ” said my father, who at once saw that the only course was the bold one. “ It is this : we are expecting some friends to spend a few days with us at Castle Carew, a kind of house-warming to that new wing ; we have done our best to gather around us whatever our good city boasts of agreeability and beauty, and with tolerable success. There is, I may say, but one wanting to make our triumph complete. With her presence, I'd wager a thousand guineas that no country mansion in Great Britain could contest the palm with us. ”

Fagan grew deadly pale, as he listened, then flushed deeply, and a second time a sickly hue crept over his features, as, in a voice barely above a whisper, he said—

“ You mean my daughter, sir ? ”

“ Of course I do, Tony. A man needn't read riddles to know who is the handsomest girl in Dublin. I hope you'll not deny us the favour of her company. My wife will meet her at Bray ; she'll come into town, if you prefer it, and take her up here. ”

“ Oh, no, sir—not here, ” said Fagan, hurriedly, who, whatever plans he might be forming in his mind, quickly saw the inconvenience of such a step.

"It shall be as you please in every respect, Fagan. Now, on Tuesday morning——"

"Not so fast, sir—not so fast," said Fagan, calmly. "You haven't given me time for much reflection now; and the very little thought I have bestowed on the matter suggests grave doubts to me. Nobody knows better than Mr. Carew that a wide gulf separates our walk in life from his—that however contented with our lot in this world, it is a very humble one——"

"Egad, I like such humility. The man who can draw a check for ten thousand at sight, and yet never detect any remarkable alteration in his banker's book, ought to be proud of the philosophy that teaches him contentment. Tony, my worthy friend, don't try to mystify me. You know, and you'd be a fool if you didn't know, that with your wealth and your daughter's beauty you have only to choose the station she will occupy. There is but one way you can possibly defeat her success, and that is by estranging her from the world, and withdrawing her from all intercourse with society. I can't believe that this is your intention—I can scarcely credit that it could be her wish. Let us, then, have the honour of introducing her to that rank, the very highest position in which she would grace and dignify. I ask it as a favour—the very greatest you can bestow on us."

"No, sir; it cannot be. It's impossible, utterly impossible."

"I am really curious to know upon what grounds, for I confess they are a secret to me!"

"So they must remain, then, sir, if you cannot persuade me to open more of my heart than I am in the habit of doing with comparative strangers. I can be very grateful for the honour you intend me, Mr. Carew, but the best way to be so is, probably, not to accompany that feeling with any sense of personal humiliation!"

"You are certainly not bent on giving me any clue to your motives, Fagan."

"I'm sorry for it, sir; but frankness to you might be great unfairness to myself."

"More riddles, Tony, and I'm far too dull to read them."

"Well, then, sir, perhaps you'd understand me when I say, that Anthony Fagan, low and humble as he is, has no mind to expose his daughter to the sneers and scoffs of a rank she has no pretension to mix with; that miser as he is, he wouldn't bring a blush of shame to her cheek for all the wealth of India! and that, rather than sit at home here and brood over every insult that would be offered to the usurer's daughter by

those beggarly spendthrifts, that are at liberty by his bounty, he'd earn his name of the Grinder by crushing them to the dust!"

The vehemence of his utterance had gone on increasing as he spoke, till at the end the last words were given with almost a scream of passion.

"I must say, Fagan," replied my father, calmly, "that you form a very humble, I trust a very unfair, estimate of the habits of my house, not to say of my own feelings. However, we'll not dispute the matter; good evening to you."

"Good evening, sir; I'm sorry I was so warm; I hope I have said nothing that could offend you."

"Not when you didn't mean offence, believe me, Fagan. I repeat my hope, that the friends and acquaintances with whom I live are not the underbred and ill-mannered class you think them; beyond that I have nothing to say—good evening."

Probably no amount of discussion and argument on the subject could so palpably have convinced Fagan of the vast superiority of a man of good manners over one of inferior breeding, as did the calm and gentleman-like quietude of my father's bearing, in contradistinction to his own passionate outbreak.

"One moment, sir—one moment," cried he, laying his hand on my father's arm; "you really believe that one humbly born as Polly, the daughter of a man in my condition, would be received amongst the high and titled of Dublin without a scornful allusion to whence she came—without a sneer at her rank in life?"

"If I thought anything else, Fagan, I should be dishonoured in making this request of you."

"She shall go, sir—she shall go," cried Fagan.

"Thanks for the confidence, Fagan; I know you'd rather trust me with half your fortune without a scratch of my pen in return."

Fagan turned away his head, but a motion of his hand across his eyes showed how he felt the speech.

To obviate the awkwardness of the moment, my father entered upon the details of the journey, for which it was arranged that Fagan was to send his daughter to Bray, where a carriage from Castle Carew would be in waiting to convey her the remainder of the way. These points being settled, my father once again thanked him for his compliance, and departed.

I should be only mystifying my reader most unjustifiably

should I affect any secrecy as to my father's reasons for this singular invitation; for although the gossipry of the day could adduce innumerable plots and plans which were to spring out of it, I sincerely believe his sole motive was the pleasure that he and my mother were sure to feel in doing a piece of graceful and generous politeness. MacNaghten's account of Polly had strongly excited their curiosity, not to speak of a more worthy feeling, in her behalf, and knowing that Fagan's immense wealth would one day or other be hers, they felt it was but fair that she should see, and be seen, by that world of which she was yet to be a distinguished ornament. Beyond this, I implicitly believe, they had no motive nor plan. Of course, I do not pretend to say, that even amongst his own very guests, the men who travelled down to enjoy his hospitality, his conduct did not come in for its share of criticism. Many an artful device was attributed to this seeming stroke of policy, not one of which, however, did not more redound to my father's craft than to his character for honourable dealing. But what would become of "bad tongues" in this world if there were not generous natures to calumniate and vilify! Of a verity, scandal prefers a high mark and an unblemished reputation for its assaults, far better than a damaged fame and a tattered character; it seems more heroic to shy a pebble through a pane of plate-glass than to pitch a stone through a cracked casement!



CHAPTER IX.

A GENTLEMAN USHER

AMONG the members of the Viceregal suite who were to accompany his Grace on a visit, was a certain Barry Rutledge, a gentleman-usher, whose character and doings were well known in the times I speak of. When a very young man, Rutledge had been stripped of his entire patrimony on the turf, and was thrown for support upon the kindness of those who had known him in better days. Whether it was that time had developed or adversity had sharpened his wits, it is certain that he showed himself to be a far shrewder and more intelligent being than the world had heretofore deemed him. If he was not gifted with any very great insight into politics, for which he was free to own he had no taste, he was well versed in human nature, at least in all its least favourable aspects, and thoroughly understood how to detect and profit by the weaknesses of those with whom he came in contact.

His racing experiences had given him all the training and teaching which he possessed, and to his own fancied analogy between the turf and the great race of life, did he owe all the shrewd inspirations that guided him.

His favourite theory was, that however well a horse may gallop, there is always, if one but knew it, some kind of ground that would throw him "out of stride;" and so of men: he calculated that every one is accompanied by some circumstance or other, which forms his stumbling-block through life; and however it may escape notice, that to its existence will be referrible innumerable turnings and windings, whose seeming contradictions excite surprise and astonishment.

To learn all these secret defects, to store his mind with every incident of family and fortune of the chief actors of the time, was the mechanism by which he worked, and certainly in such inquisitorial pursuits it would have been hard to find his equal. By keenly watching the lines of action men pursued, he had taught himself to trace back to their motives, and by the exercise of these faculties he had at last attained to a skill in reading character that seemed little short of marvellous.

Nature had been most favourable in fitting him for his career, for his features were of that cast which bespeaks a soft, easy temperament, careless and unsuspecting. His large blue eyes and curly golden hair gave him, even at thirty, a boyish look, and both in voice and manner was he singularly youthful, while his laugh was like the joyous outburst of a happy school-boy.

None could have ever suspected that such a figure as this, arrayed in the trappings of a courtly usher, could have inclosed within it a whole net-work of secret intrigue and plot. My mother had the misfortune to make a still more fatal blunder; for seeing him, in what she pardonably enough believed to be a livery, she took him to be a menial, and actually despatched him to her carriage to fetch her fan! The incident got abroad, and Rutledge, of course, was well laughed at; but he seemed to enjoy the mirth so thoroughly, and told the story so well himself, that it could never be imagined he felt the slightest annoyance on the subject. By all accounts, however, the great weakness of his character was the belief that he was decidedly noble-looking and high-bred; that place him where you would, costume him how you might, surround him with all that might disparage pretension, yet that such was the innate gentlemanhood of his nature—the least critical of observers would not fail to acknowledge him. To say that he concealed this weakness most completely—that he shrouded it in the very depth of his heart, is only to repeat what I have already mentioned as to his character, for he was watchful over every trifle that should betray a knowledge of his nature, and sensitively alive to the terrors of ridicule. From that hour forward he became my mother's enemy—not, as many others might, by decrying her pretensions to beauty, or by any depreciatory remarks on her dress or manner, but in a far deeper sense, and with more malignant determination.

To learn who she was—of what family—what were her connections—their rank, name, and station, were his first objects; and although the difficulties of the inquiry were considerable, his sources of knowledge were sufficient to overcome them. He got to hear something at least of her history, and to trace back her mysterious journey to an ancient chateau belonging to the Crown of France. Beyond this, in all likelihood, he could not go; but even here were materials enough for his subtlety to make use of.

The Viceregal visit to Castle Carew had been all planned by him. He had persuaded the Duke that the time was come

when, by a little timely flattering, the whole landed gentry of Ireland were in his hands. The conciliating tone of the speech which opened Parliament—the affectedly generous confidence of England in all the acts of the Irish Legislature, had already succeeded to a miracle. Grattan himself moved the address in terms of unbounded reliance on the good faith of Government. Flood followed in the same strain, and others, of lesser note, were ashamed to utter a sentiment of distrust, in the presence of such splendid instances of confiding generosity. My father, although not a leading orator of the House, was, from connection and fortune, possessed of much influence, and well worth the trouble of gaining over, and as Rutledge said, “It was pleasant to have to deal with a man who wanted neither place, money, nor the peerage, but whose alliance could be ratified at his own table, and pledged in his own Burgundy.”

Every one knows what happens in the East when a great sovereign makes a present of an elephant to some inferior chief. The morale of a Viceregal visit is pretty much in the same category. It is an honour that cannot be declined, and it is generally sure to ruin the entertainer. Of course I do not talk of the present times, nor of late years. Lord-Lieutenants have grown to be less stately; the hosts have become less splendid. But in the days I speak of here, there were great names and great fortunes in the land. The influence of the country neither flowed from Roman rescripts nor priestly denunciations. The Lions of Judah, and the Doves of Elphin, were, as yet unknown to our political zoology; and, with all their faults and shortcomings, we had at least a national gentry party—high-spirited, hospitable, and generous, and whose misfortunes were probably owing to the fact that they gave a too implicit faith to the adaptiveness of English laws to a people who have not, in their habits, natures or feelings, the slightest analogy to Englishmen! and that, when at length they began to perceive the error, it was already too late to repair it.

The Viceroy's arrival at Castle Carew was fixed for a Tuesday, and on Monday evening Mr. Barry Rutledge drove up to the door just as my father and mother, with Dan MacNaghten, were issuing forth for a walk. He had brought with him a list of those for whom accommodation should be provided, and the number considerably exceeded all expectation. Nor was this the only disconcerting event, for my father now learned, for the first time, that he should have taken his Grace's pleasure with regard to each of the other guests he had invited to meet him

—a piece of etiquette he had never so much as thought of. "Of course, it's not much matter," said Rutledge, laughing easily; "your acquaintances are all known to his Grace."

"I'm not so sure of that," interposed my father, quickly; for he suddenly remembered that Polly Fagan was not likely to have been presented at Court, nor was she one to expect to escape notice.

"He never thinks of politics in private life; he has not the smallest objection to meet every shade of politician."

"I'm quite sure of that," said my father musing, but by no means satisfied with the prospect before him.

"Tell Rutledge whom you expect," broke in Dan, "and he'll be able to guide you, should there be any difficulty about them."

"Ma foi!" broke in my mother, half impatiently, in her imperfect language. "If dey are of la bonne société, what will you have more?"

"Of course," assented Rutledge. "The names we are all familiar with—the good houses of the country." Carelessly as he spoke, he contrived to dart a quick glance towards my mother, but to his astonishment she showed no sign of discomfort or uneasiness.

"Egad, I think it somewhat hard that a man's company should not be of his own choosing!" said MacNaghten, half angrily. "Do you think his Grace would order the dinner away if there happened to be a dish at table he didn't like?"

"Not exactly, if he were not compelled to eat of it," said Rutledge, good-humouredly; "but I'm sure all this time, that we're only amusing ourselves fighting shadows. Just tell me who are coming, and I'll be able to give you a hint if any of them should be personally displeasing to his Grace."

"You remember them all, Dan," said my father; "try and repeat the names."

"Shall we keep the lump of sugar for the last," said Dan, "as they do with children when they give them medicine? or shall we begin with your own friends, Rutledge? for we've got Archdall, and Billy Burton, and Freke, and Barty Hoare, and some others of the same stamp—fellows that I call very bad company, but that I'm well aware you Castle folk expect to see everywhere you go!"

"But you've done things admirably," cried Rutledge. "These are exactly the men for us. Have you Townsend?"

"Ay, and his flapper, Tisdall; for without Joe he never remembers what story to tell next. And then there's Jack Preston! Egad you'll fancy yourselves on the Treasury benches."

"Well, now for the Opposition" said Rutledge, gaily.

"To begin: Grattan can't come—a sick child, the measles, or something or other wrong in the nursery, which he thinks of more consequence than 'all your houses;' Ponsonby won't come—he votes you all very dull company; Hugh O'Donnell is of the same mind, and adds, that he'd rather see Tom Thumb, in Fishamble Street, than all your court tomfooleries twice over. But then we've old Bob Ffrench—Bitter Bob; Joe Curtis——"

"Not the same Curtis that refused his Grace leave to shoot over his bog at Ballyvane?"

"The very man, and just as likely to send another refusal if the request be repeated."

"I didn't know of this, Dan," interposed my father. "This is really awkward."

"Perhaps it was a little untoward," replied MacNaghten, "but there was no help for it. Joe asked himself, and when I wrote to say that the Duke was coming, he replied that he'd certainly not fail to be here, for he didn't think there was another house in the kingdom likely to harbour them both at the same time.

"He was right there," said Rutledge, gravely.

"He generally is right," replied MacNaghten, with a dry nod. "Stephen Blake, too, isn't unlikely to come over, particularly if he finds out that we've little room to spare, and that he'll put us all to inconvenience."

"Oh, we'll have room enough for every one," cried my father.

"I do hope, at least, none will go away for want of—how you say, place?" said my mother.

"That's exactly the right word for it," cried MacNaghten, slyly. "'Tis looking for places the half of them are. I've said nothing of the ladies, Rutledge; for of course your courtly habits see no party distinctions amongst the fair sex. We'll astonish your English notions, I fancy, with such a display of Irish beauty as you've no idea of."

"That we can appreciate without the slightest disparagement on the score of politics."

"Need you tell him of Polly?" whispered my father in Dan's ear.

"No ; it's just as well not."

"I'd tell him, Dan ; the thing is done and cannot be undone," continued he, in the same undertone.

"As you please."

"We mean to show you such a girl, Rutledge, as probably not St. James's itself could match. When I tell you she'll have not very far from half a million sterling, I think it's not too much to say that your English Court hasn't such a prize in the wheel."

"It's Westrop's daughter you mean?"

"Not a bit of it, man. Dorothy won't have fifty thousand. I doubt greatly if she'll have thirty ; and as to look, style, and figure, she's not to compare with the girl I mean."

"The Lady Lucy Lighton ? and she is very beautiful, I confess."

"Lucy Lighton ! Why, what are you thinking of ? Where would she get the fortune I am speaking of ? But you'd never guess the name ; you never saw her—perhaps never so much as heard of her. She is a Miss Fagan."

"Polly—Polly Fagan, the Grinder's daughter ?"

"So, then, you have heard of her ?" said Dan, not a little disconcerted by this burst of intelligence.

"Heard of her ! Nay, more, I've seen and spoken with her. I once made a descent on the old father, in the hope of doing something with him, and being, accidentally I believe it was, shown upstairs, I made Miss Polly's acquaintance, but with just as little profit."

"You'll have more time to improve the intimacy here, Rutledge," said my father, laughingly, "if MacNaghten be not a rival 'near the throne.'"

"I'll not interfere with you, Barry," cried MacNaghten, carelessly.

Rutledge gave one of his usual unmeaning laughs, and said, "After all, if we except Ffrench and Curtis, there's nothing to be afraid of ; and I suppose there will be no difficulty in keeping them at a safe distance."

"Bob Ffrench cares much more for Carew's Burgundy than for his grand acquaintances," interposed MacNaghten ; "and as for Curtis, he only comes out of curiosity. Once satisfied that all will go on in the routine fashion of every other country visit, he'll jog home again, sorely discontented with himself for the trouble he has taken to come here."

"I need scarcely tell you," said Rutledge, taking my father's arm, and leading him to one side, "I need scarcely tell you,

that we'd better avoid all discussion about politics and party. You yourself are very unlikely to commit any error in tact, but of course you cannot answer for others. Would it not, then, be as well to give some kind of hint?"

"Faith," broke in my father hastily, "I will never attempt to curb the liberty of speech of any one who does me the honour to be my guest; and I am sure I have not a friend in the world who would tamely submit to such dictation."

"Perhaps you are right. Indeed, I'm sure you are," broke in Rutledge, and hastened his step till he joined the others.



CHAPTER X.

THE COMPANY AT CASTLE CAREW.

FROM an early hour on the following morning, the company began to pour in to Castle Carew, their style and retinue being as varied as may well be imagined. Some arriving in all the pomp and splendour of handsomely-appointed equipage. Some dashing up with splashed and panting posters, and others jogging lazily along the avenue in some old "conveniency" of a past age, drawn by animals far more habituated to the plough than the phaeton. Amongst those first was conspicuous the singular old noddy, as it was called, in which Ffrench and Curtis travelled; the driver being perilously elevated some dozen feet above the earth, and perched on a bar which it required almost a rope-dancer's dexterity to occupy. This primitive conveyance, as it trundled along before the windows, drew many to gaze and jest upon its curious appearance—a degree of notice which seemed to have very opposite effects on the two individuals exposed to it; for while Ffrench nodded, kissed hands, and smiled good-humouredly to his friends, Curtis sat back with his arms folded, and his hat slouched over his eyes, as if endeavouring to escape recognition.

"Confound the rascal!" muttered he between his teeth, "couldn't he have managed to creep round by some back way; his blasted jingling old rat-trap has called the whole household

to look at us!—and, may I never, if he hasn't broken something! What's the matter—what are you getting down for?"

"'Tis the mare's got the reins under her tail, yer honer!" said the driver, as he descended some half-dozen feet, to enable him to get near enough to rectify the entanglement. The process was made more difficult by the complicated machinery of springs, straps, bars, and bolts which supported the box, and in the midst of which the poor fellow sat as in a cage. He was, however, proceeding in a very business-like way, to tug at the tail with one hand, and pull out the reins with the other, when, suddenly, far behind, there came the tearing tramp of horses advancing at speed, the cracking of the postillions' whips adding to the clamour. The horses of the noddy feeling no restraint from the reins, and terrified by the uproar, kicked up their heels at once, and bolted away, shooting the driver out of his den into a flower-pot. Away dashed the affrighted beasts, the crazy old conveyance rattling and shaking behind them with a deafening uproar. Immediately beyond the hall-door, the avenue took a sweep round a copse, and by a gentle descent wound its course towards the stables, a considerable expanse of ornamental water bordering the road on the other side. Down the slope they now rushed madly; and, unable from their speed to accomplish the turn in safety, they made a sudden "jib" at the water's edge, which upset the noddy, pitching its two occupants over head and heels into the lake. By good fortune it was not more than four or five feet deep in this part, so that they came off with no other injury than a thorough drenching, and the ridicule which met them in the laughter of some fifty spectators. As for Ffrench, he had to sit down on the bank and laugh till the very tears came—the efforts of Curtis to rid himself of tangled dead weed and straggling aquatic plants having driven that choleric subject almost out of his wits.

"This may be an excellent joke; I've no doubt it is, since you seem to think so; but, by Heaven, sir, I'll try if I cannot make some one responsible for it! Yes, gentlemen," added he, shaking his fist at the crowded windows, "it's not all over yet; we'll see who laughs last!"

"Faith, we're well off, to escape with a little fright, and some frog-spawn," said Bob; "it might have been worse!"

"It shall be worse, sir, far worse, depend upon it!" said the other.

By this time my father had come up to the spot, and

endeavoured, as well as the absurdity of the scene would permit him, to condole with the angry sufferer. It was not, however, without the greatest difficulty that Curtis could be prevailed upon to enter the house. The very idea of being a laughing-stock was madness to him; and it was only on the strict assurance, that no allusion to the event would be tolerated by my father, that he at last gave in and accompanied him.

Insignificant as was this incident in itself, it was the origin of very grave consequences. Curtis was one of those men who are unforgiving to anything like ridicule; and the sense of injury added to the poignant suffering of a ruined estate, and a fallen condition, by no means improved a temper irascible beyond everything. He entered the house, swearing every species of vengeance on the innocent cause of his misadventure.

"Time was, sir, when a lord-lieutenant drove to a gentleman's door in a style becoming his dignity, and not heralded by half-a-dozen rascals, whip-cracking and caracolliing like the clowns in a circus!"

Such was his angry commentary, as he pushed past my father, and hastened to his room. Long after he sat brooding and mourning over his calamity. It was forgotten in the drawing-room, where Polly had now arrived, dividing attention and interest with the Viceroy himself. Indeed, while his grace was surrounded with courtly and grave figures, discussing the news of the day and the passing topics, Polly was the centre of a far more animated group, whose laughter and raillery rung through the apartment.

My mother was charmed with her, not only because she possessed considerable personal charms, but being of her own age, and speaking French with ease and fluency, it was a great happiness to her to unbend once again in all the freedom of her own delightful language. It was to no purpose that my father whispered to her the names and titles of various guests to whom peculiar honour was due; it was in vain that he led her to the seat beside some tiresome old lady, all dulness and diamonds; by some magical attraction she would find herself leaning over Polly's chair, and listening to her, as she talked, in admiring ecstasy. It was unquestionably true, that although most of the company were selected less for personal qualities than their political influence, there were many most agreeable persons in the number. My mother, however, was already fascinated, and she required more self-

restraint than she usually imposed upon herself, to forego a pleasure which she saw no reason for relinquishing.

My father exerted himself to the uttermost. Few men, I believe, performed the host more gracefully ; but nothing more fatally mars the ease and destroys the charm of that character than anything like over-effort at success. His attentions were too marked and too hurried ; he had exaggerated to himself the difficulties of his situation, and he increased them tenfold by his own terrors.

The Duke was one of those plain, quiet, well-bred persons so frequently met with in the upper classes of England, and whose strongest characteristic is, probably, the excessive simplicity of their manners, and the total absence of everything bordering on pretension. This very quietude, however, is frequently misinterpreted, and, in Ireland especially, often taken for the very excess of pride and haughtiness. Such did it seem on the present occasion ; for now that the restraint of a great position was removed, and that he suffered himself to unbend from the cumbrous requirements of a state existence, the ease of his deportment was suspected to be indifference, and the absence of all effort was deemed a contemptuous disregard for the company.

The moment, too, was not happily chosen to bring men of extreme and opposite opinions into contact. They met with coldness and distrust ; they were even suspicious of the motives which had led to their meeting—in fact a party whose elements were less suited to each other rarely assembled in an Irish country-house ; and by ill luck the weather took one of those wintry turns which are not unfrequent in our so-called summers, and set in to rain with that determined perseverance so common to a July in Ireland.

Nearly all the resources by which the company were to have been amused were of an out-door kind, and depended greatly on weather. The shooting, the driving, the pic-nicing, the visits to remarkable scenes in the neighbourhood, which Dan MacNaghten had “programmed” with such care and zeal, must now be abandoned, and supplied by occupation beneath the roof.

Oh, good reader, has it ever been your lot to have your house filled with a large and incongruous party, weather-bound and “bored ?” To see them stealing stealthily about corridors, and peeping into rooms, as if fearful of chancing on something more tiresome than themselves ? To watch their silent contemplation of the weather-glass, or their mournful gaze at the lowering

and leaden sky? To hear the lazy, drowsy tone of the talk, broken by many a half-suppressed yawn? To know and to feel that they regard themselves as your prisoners, and you as their gaoler?—that your very butler is in their eyes but an upper turnkey? Have you witnessed the utter failure of all efforts to amuse them?—have you overheard the criticism that pronounced your piano out of tune, your billiard-table out of level, your claret out of condition? Have you caught mysterious whisperings of conspiracies to get away? and heard the word “post-horses” uttered with an accent of joyful enthusiasm? Have you watched the growing antipathies of those that, in your secret plannings, you had destined to become sworn friends? Have you grieved over the disappointment which your peculiar favourites have been doomed to experience? Have you silently contemplated all the wrong combinations and unhappy conjunctures that have grown up, when you expected but unanimity and good feeling? Have you known all these things? and have you passed through the terrible ordeal of endeavouring to amuse the dissatisfied, to reconcile the incompatible, and to occupy the indolent? Without some such melancholy experience, you can scarcely imagine all that my poor father had to suffer.

Never was there such discontent as that household exhibited. The Viceregal party saw few of the non-adherents, and perceived that they made no converts amongst the enemy. The Liberals were annoyed at the restraint imposed on them by the presence of the Government people; the ladies were outraged at the distinguished notice conferred by their hostess on one who was not their equal in social position, and whom they saw for the first time admitted into the “set.” In fact, instead of a large party, met together to please and be pleased, the society was broken up into small coteries and knots, all busily criticizing and condemning their neighbours, and only interrupting their censures by grievous complaints of the ill-fortune that had induced them to come there.

It was now the third morning of the Duke’s visit, and the weather showed no symptoms of improvement. The dark sky was relieved towards the horizon by that line of treacherous light which to all accustomed to an Irish climate is the signal for continued rain. The most intrepid votary of out-door amusements had given up the cause in despair, and, as though dreading to augment the common burthen of dulness by meeting most of the guests, preferred keeping their rooms, and confining to themselves the gloom that oppressed them.

The small drawing-room that adjoined my mother's dressing-room was the only exception to this almost prison discipline, and there she now sat with Polly, MacNaghten, Rutledge, and one or two more, the privileged visitors of that favoured spot—my mother at her embroidery-frame, that pleasant, mock occupation which serves so admirably as an aid to talking or to listening, which every Frenchwoman knows so well how to employ as a conversational fly-wheel. They assuredly gave no evidence in their tone of that depression which the gloomy weather had thrown over the other guests. Laughter and merriment abounded; and a group more amusing and amused it would have been difficult to imagine. Rutledge, perhaps, turned his eyes towards the door occasionally, with the air of one in expectation of something or somebody; but none noticed this anxiety, nor, indeed, was he one to permit his thoughts to sway his outward actions.

"The poor Duke?" cried MacNaghten, "he can bear it no longer. See, there he goes, in defiance of rain and wind, to take his walk in the shrubbery!"

"And mon pauvre mari—go with him," said my mother, in a tone of lamentation that made all the hearers burst out a-laughing. "Ah, I know why you Irish are all so domestic," added she—"c'est le climat!"

"Will you allow us nothing to the credit of our fidelity—to our attachments, madame?" said Rutledge, who, while he continued to talk, never took his eyes off the two figures, who now walked side by side in the shrubbery.

"It is a capricious kind of thing, after all, is your Irish fidelity," said Polly. "Your love is generally but another form of self-esteem; you marry a woman because you can be proud of her beauty, her wit, her manners, and her accomplishments, and you are faithful because you never get tired in the indulgence of your own vanity."

"How kind of you is it, then, to let us never want for the occasion of indulging it," said Rutledge, half slyly.

"I don't quite agree with you, Miss Polly," said MacNaghten, after a pause, in which he seemed to be reflecting over her words; "I think most men—Irishmen I mean—marry to please themselves. They may make mistakes of course; I don't pretend to say that they always choose well; but it is right to bear in mind that they are not free agents, and cannot have whom they please to wife."

"It is better with us," broke in my mother. "You marry one you have never seen before; you have nothing of how

you call 'exultation,' point des idées romantiques; you are delighted with all the little 'soins' and attentions of your husband, who has, at least, one inestimable merit—he is never familiar."

"How charming!" said Rutledge, with mock seriousness.

"Is it not!" continued she, not detecting the covert irony of his tone; "it is your intimité.—How you call it?"

"Intimacy."

"Oui," said she, smiling, but not trusting herself to repeat the word. "C'est cela—that destroys your happiness."

"Egad, I'd as soon be a bachelor," broke in MacNaghten, "if I only were to look at my wife with an opera-glass across the theatre, or be permitted to kiss her kid-glove on her birthday."

"What he say—why you laugh?" cried my mother, who could not follow the rapidity of his utterance.

"Mr. MacNaghten prefers homeliness to refinement," said Polly.

"Oui; you are right, my dear," added my mother; "it is more refined. And then, instead of all that 'tracasserie' you have about your house, and your servants, and the thousand little 'inconvenance de ménage,' you have one whom you consult on your toilette, your equipage, your 'coiffure;' in fact, in all affairs of good taste. Voilà Walter, par exemple, he never derange me for a moment—I hope I never ennuyé him."

"Quite right—perfectly right," said Polly, with a well-assumed gravity.

"By Jove, that's only single harness work, after all," said MacNaghten; "I'd rather risk a kick, now and then, and have another beside me to tug at this same burthen of daily life."

"I no understand you, you speak so fast. How droll you are, you Irish! See there, the Lord Duke and my husband, how they shake hands as if they did not meet before, and they walk together for the last half-hour."

"A most cordial embrace, indeed," said Polly, fixing her eyes on Rutledge, who seemed far from being at ease under the inspection, while MacNaghten, giving one hasty glance through the window, snatched up his hat and left the room. He passed rapidly down the stairs, crossed the hall, and was just leaving the house when my father met him.

"The very man I wanted, Dan," cried he; "come to my room with me for a few minutes."

As they entered the room, my father turned the key in the door, and said—

“We must not be interrupted, for I want to have a little talk with you. I have just parted with the Duke——”

“I know it,” broke in Dan: “I saw you shake hands, and it was that made me hurry down stairs to meet you.”

My father flushed up suddenly, and it was not till after a few seconds he was collected enough to continue.

“The fact is, Dan,” said he, “this gathering of the clans has been a most unlucky business after all. There’s no telling how it might have turned out, with favourable weather and good sport; but caged up together, the menagerie has done nothing but growl and show their teeth; and, egad, very little was wanting to have set them all by the ears in open conflict.”

MacNaghten shrugged his shoulders without speaking.

“It’s an experiment I’ll assuredly never try again,” continued my father; “for whether it is that I have forgotten Irishmen, or that they are not what they used to be, but all has gone wrong.”

“Your own fault, Watty. You were far too anxious about it going right; and whenever a man wants to usurp destiny, he invariably books himself for a ‘break down.’ You tried, besides, what no tact nor skill could manage. You wanted grand people to be grand, and witty people to be witty, and handsome people to look beautiful. Now, the very essence of a party like this is, to let everybody try and fancy themselves something that they are not, or, at least, that they are not usually. Your great folk ought to have been suffered to put off the greatness, and only be esteemed for their excessive agreeability. Your smart men ought not to have been called on for pleasantries, but only thought very high-bred and well-mannered, or, what is better still, well-born. And your beauties should have been permitted to astonish us all by a simplicity that despised paint, patches, and powder; and captivate us all, as a kind of domestic shepherdesses.”

“It’s too serious for jesting about, Dan; for I doubt if I have not offended some of the oldest friends I had in the world.”

“I hope not,” said MacNaghten, more seriously.

“I am sadly afraid it is so, though,” said my father. “You know the Fosbrokes are gone?”

“Gone? When? I never heard of it!”

“They’re gone. They left this about an hour ago. I must say it was very absurd of them. They ought to have made

allowances for difference of country, habits, education ; her very ignorance of the language should have been taken as an excuse. The Tisdalls I am less surprised at."

"Are they gone, too?"

"Yes! and without a leave-taking; except so far as in a very dry note, dated five o'clock in the morning, may be taken for such, telling of sudden intelligence just received—immediate necessity, and so forth. But after Harvey Hepton, I ought to be astonished at nothing."

"What of Harvey?" cried Dan, impatiently.

"Why he came into my room while I was dressing, and before I had time to ask the reason, he said—

"'Watty, you and I have been friends since our school-days, and it would tell very badly for either, or both of us, if we quarrelled; and that no such ill-luck may befall us, I have come to say good-bye.'

"'Good-bye! but on what account?' exclaimed I.

"'Faith I'd rather you'd guess my reason than ask me for it, Watty. You well know how, in our bachelor days, I used to think this house half my own. I came and went as often without an invitation as with one; and as to supposing that I was not welcome, it would as soon have occurred to me to doubt of my identity. Now, however, we are both married. Matters are totally changed; nor does it follow, however we might wish it so, that our wives will like each other as well as you and I do.'

"'I see, Harvey,' said I, interrupting him, 'Mrs. Hepton is offended at my wife's want of attention to her guests; but will not so amiable and clever a person as Mrs. Hepton make allowances for inexperience, a new country, a strange language, her very youth—she is not eighteen?'

"'I'm sure my wife took no ill-natured view of the case. I'm certain that if she alone were concerned, that is, I mean, if she herself were the only sufferer——'

"'So, then, it seems there is a copartnery in this misfortune,' broke I in, half angrily, for I was vexed to hear an old friend talk like some frumpy, antiquated dowager.

"'That's exactly the case, Watty,' said he, calmly. 'Your friends will go their way, sadly enough, perhaps, but not censoriously; but others will not be so delicately-minded, and there will be plenty rude enough to say, who and what is she that treats us all in this fashion?'

"Yes, Dan," cried my father, with a flushed brow, and an eye flashing with passion, "he said those words to me, standing

where you stand this instant ! I know nothing more afterwards. I believe he said something about old friendship and school-days, but I heard it imperfectly, and I was relieved when he was gone, and that I could throw myself down into that chair, and thank God that I had not insulted an old friend under my own roof. It would actually seem as if some evil influence were over the place. The best-tempered have become cross ; the good-natured have grown uncharitable ; and even the shrewd fellows that, at least, know life and manners, have actually exhibited themselves as totally deficient in the commonest elements of judgment. Just think of Rutledge—who, if not a very clever fellow, should, at all events, have picked up some share of luck by his position—just fancy what he has done : he has actually had the folly—I might well give it a worse name—to go to Curtis, and ask him to make some kind of apology to the Duke for his rude refusal of leave to shoot over his estate—a piece of impertinence that Curtis has never ceased to glory in and boast of—a refusal that the old fellow has, so to say, lived on ever since—to ask him to retract and excuse it ! I have no exact knowledge of what passed between them—indeed I only know what his Grace himself told me—but Curtis's manner must have been little short of outrage ; and the only answer Rutledge could obtain from him was—‘ Did your master send you with this message to me ? ’—a question, I fancy, the other was not disposed to answer. The upshot, however, was, that as the Duke was taking his walk this morning, after breakfast, he suddenly came upon Curtis, who was evidently waiting for him. If the Duke did not give me very exact details of the interview, I am left to conjecture from his manner, that it must have been one of no common kind. ‘ Your friend,’ said his Grace, ‘ was pleased to tell me what he called some home truths ; he took a rapid survey of the acts of the Government, accompanying it with a commentary as little flattering as may be ; he called us all by very hard names, and did not spare our private characters. In fact, as he himself assured me, fearing so good an opportunity might not readily present itself of telling me a piece of his mind, he left very little unsaid on any topic that he could think of, concluding with a most meaning intimation, that although he had refused me the shooting of his woodcocks, he would be charmed to afford me the opportunity of another kind of sport—I suppose he meant a better mark for me to aim at—and so he left me.’ Though nothing could possibly be in better taste or temper than the Duke's recital of the scene, it was easy to see that he was sorely pained and offended

by it. Indeed he wound up by regretting that a very urgent necessity would recall him at once to town, and a civil assurance that he'd not fail to complete his visit at some more fortunate opportunity. I turned at once to seek out Curtis, and learn his version of the affair, but he and Ffrench had already taken their departure, this brief note being all their leave-taking:—

“ ‘DEAR WATTY—In your father's and indeed in your grandfather's day, one was pretty sure what company might be met with under your roof. I'm sorry to see times are changed, and deeply deplore that your circumstances make it necessary for you to fill your house with Government hacks, spies, and informers. Take my word for it, honest men and their wives won't like such associates; and though they sneer now at the Grinder's daughter, she'll be the best of your company ere long.

“ ‘My compliments to his Grace, and say I hope he'll not forget that I have promised him some shooting.

‘Yours truly,

M. CURTIS.’

“ A line from Ffrench followed:—

“ ‘D. W.—As I came with Curtis, I must go with him; but I hope soon to see you, and explain some things which I grieve to defer even for a short time.’

“ Now, Dan, I ask you, is this courteous—is it even fair and manly? They see me endeavouring to bring men together socially, who, whatever their political differences, might yet learn to know and esteem each other in private. They comprehend all the difficulty imposed by my wife's extreme youth and inexperience, and this is the aid they give me! But I know well what it means! The whole thing is part and parcel of that tyranny that a certain set of fellows have exercised over this country for the last century. A blind, misguided, indiscriminate hatred of England, and of Englishmen, is their only notion of a policy, and they'd stop short at nothing in their stupid animosity. They've mistaken their man, however, this time. Egad, they ought to have tried some other game before they ventured to bully me. In their blind ignorance, they fancied that because I entertained a Viceroy, I must necessarily be a Castle hack. Faith, if I become so yet, they've only themselves to thank for it. As it is, I had no sooner read that note than I hastened downstairs to seek the Duke, and just overtook him in the shrubbery. I told him frankly the indignation I felt

at a dictation which I suffered no man to assume towards me. I said more—I assured him that no sneers of party, nor any intimidation of a set, should ever prevent me giving the Government a support whenever the measures were such as in my conscience I approved of. I am the more free to say so, because I want nothing—I would accept of nothing from them; and I went so far as to say as much. ‘I’ll never insult you with an offer, Carew,’ was the Duke’s reply to me, and we shook hands on our bargain!”

“It was that very shake-hands alarmed me!” said Dan, gravely; “I saw it from the window, and guessed there was something in the wind!”

“Come, come, Dan, it’s not in your nature to be suspicious—you couldn’t possibly suppose——”

“I never lose time in suspecting anybody,” broke in MacNaghten; “but indeed it’s not worth any one’s while to plot against me! I only say, Watty, don’t be hurried away by any momentary anger with Curtis and the like of him. You have a fine position, don’t wreck it out of a mere pique!”

“I’ll go abroad again! I’ve lived too long out of this wasps’ nest to endure the eternal buzzing and stinging that goes on around me.”

“I think you’re right there,” said MacNaghten.

My father made no reply, and looked anything but pleased at the ready concurrence in his plan.

“We shall never understand them, nor they us,” said he, peevishly, after a pause.

MacNaghten nodded an affirmative.

“The Duke of course, then, remains here?” said Dan, after a pause.

“Of course he does not,” replied my father, pettishly; “he has announced to me the urgent necessity of his return to Dublin, nor do I see that anything has since occurred to alter that contingency.”

The tone in which he had spoken these words showed not only how he felt the taunt implied in Dan’s remark, but how sincerely to his own conscience he acknowledged its justice. There was no doubt of it! My father’s patriotism, that withstood all the blandishments of “Castle” flattery, all the seductions of power, and all the bright visions of ambition, had given way under the impulse of a wounded self-love. That men so inferior to him should dictate and control his actions, presume to influence his whole conduct, and even exercise rule in his household, gave him deep offence, coming as it did at a moment

when his spirit was chafed by disappointment; and thus, he that could neither have been bribed nor bought was entrapped by a trick and an accident.

Every one knows that there are little social panics as there are national ones—terrors for which none can account, leading to actions for which none can give the reason; so here, all of a sudden, all the guests discovered that they had reached the limit of their stay; some had to hasten home to receive visitors, others were engaged elsewhere; there were innumerable calls of duty, and affection, and business, all uttered with the accustomed sincerity, and listened to by my father with a cold acquiescence which assuredly gave no fresh obstacles to the departures.

As for my mother, her graciousness at the leave-takings only served to increase the displeasure her former indifference had created. It seemed as if her courtesy sprung out of the pleasure of being free from her guests; and as she uttered some little polite phrase in her broken language to each, the recipients looked anything but flattered at the alteration of her manner. The Viceroy alone seemed to accept these civilities literally; he vowed that he had never enjoyed three days more in his life; that Castle Carew and its hospitalities would hold the very first place in his future recollections of Ireland: these and such like, uttered with the very best of manners, and with all the influence which rank could bestow, actually delighted my mother, who was not slow to contrast the high-bred tone of the great personage with the less flattering deportment of her other guests.

It would not be a very pleasing task were we to play the eavesdropper, and, following the various carriages of the departing company, hear the comments now so freely bestowed on the host of Castle Carew. It is true some were kind-hearted enough to see all the difficulties of my father's position in the true light, and to hope that by time and a little management, these might be overcome.

There were others less generous; but what they said it would be scarcely more graceful of me to repeat; enough, that my mother was the especial mark of the strictures—the censure of my father went no further than compassion! And, oh dear! when the world condescends to compassion, what execration is equal to it! How beautifully it draws up the full indictment of your failings, that it may extend its clemency to each! How carefully does it discriminate between your depravity and your weakness, that it may not wrong you! But how cutting is the

hopefulness it expresses for your future, by suggesting some utterly impossible road for your reformation!

And now they were all gone—all, except Polly Fagan and MacNaghten; but Dan, indeed, was part of the household, and came and went as he liked. Fagan had sent his carriage to Bray, to meet his daughter, as had been agreed upon; but a letter from Polly came to say that Madame Carew had pressed her with so much kindness to remain, and that she herself was so happy, that she sincerely hoped the permission might be accorded her. The note concluded by stating that Mr. Carew would visit Dublin by the end of the week, and take that opportunity of leaving her at home.

"Oh, que nous sommes bien, ainsi!" exclaimed my mother, as the little party of four sat down to dinner; and all seemed to applaud the sentiment but my father, who seemed far more thoughtful and grave than his wont. Even this, however, threw no gloom over the rest, who were in the very happiest and best of humours. My mother was in all the ecstasy of her now joyous nature, suddenly emancipated from the toilsome drudgery of a duty she disliked. Polly, flattered by the tone of perfect equality extended to her, and by the unequivocal preference of my mother for her, hourly developed more and more of those graces which only needed opportunity for their growth, and displayed charms of manner, and resources of mind, that actually delighted her companions; while in MacNaghten's happy nature and gay-heartedness there was the only other element wanting to make the party a most pleasant one.

The arrival of the letter-bag—that little moment which, in every country household, forms the privileged interruption to every care and every amusement—broke suddenly in upon their carouse; and, as my father unlocked the precious sack, each looked eagerly for his share of the contents.

"All for myself, I see," muttered he, "nothing but 'Walter Carew,' here. Your creditors are forgetting you, Dan—not even a note of reminder or remonstrance. Silence, of course, means consent, Miss Polly: your father says nothing against your stay. But what is this, Josephine?—this looks as if meant for you; but it has been sent over half the post-offices of the kingdom, with 'Try Compton Basset, Caresfort and Chirek Castle,' I believe this is; there's no making out the address."

"Plain enough, I think," cried MacNaghten; "it is, 'Madame La Comtesse de Carew, à son Chateau, ou en Ville, Irlande.'"

"At all events, it is for me," said my mother, breaking the

seal with impatience. Scarcely had she opened the letter when she exclaimed, "Oh, la bonne chance—only think, Walter, here is Emile de Gabriac coming to Ireland!"

"You forget, dearest, that I have never seen him," said my father, dryly.

"Does that signify?" said she, with enthusiastic rapidity. "Is he not known over all Europe by reputation. That dear Emile, so good, so generous, so handsome, so full of accomplishments—rides so perfectly, sings so beautifully. "Ah, ma chère c'est fait de vous," said she to Polly, "when you see him."

Polly only smiled and bowed, with an arch look of submission, while my father broke in:

"But, how comes it that so much brilliancy should waste itself on the unprofitable atmosphere of Ireland? What is bringing him here?"

My mother continued to read on, heedless of the question, not, however, without showing by her countenance the various emotions which the letter excited; for while, at times, her colour came and went, and her eyes filled with tears, a smile would pass suddenly across her features, and at last a merry burst of laughter stopped her. "Shall I read it for you?" cried she, "for it will save me a world of explanations. This is dated from our dear old country-house on the Loire, Chateau de Lesieux:—

"April 20th.

"'Ma chère et ma belle Fifine'—he always called me Fifine, when we were children. ["Humph!" muttered my father, "read on!" and she resumed] 'Ma belle Fifine—how the dear name recalls happy hours, gay, buoyant, and brilliant, with all that could make life a paradise!—when we were both so much in love with all the world, and, consequently, with each other!' Ah, oui," exclaimed she, in a tone so perfectly simple, as to make MacNaghten burst out into a laugh, which Polly with difficulty refrained from joining.—"'You,'" continued she, reading, "'you, ma belle, have doubtless grown wiser; but I remain the same dreamy, devoted thing you once knew me. Well, perhaps, we may soon have an opportunity to talk over all this; and so now no more of it. You may, perhaps, have heard—I cannot guess what news may or may not reach you in your far away solitudes—that the Cour de Cassation has decided against me; and that, consequently, they have not only rejected my claim, but have actually questioned my right to the

domain of Chasse Loups, and the famous jewels which my grandfather received from Isabella of Spain.

“They say—I’m not going to worry you with details—but they say something to this effect—that as we were engaged with Law in that great scheme of his—the Mississippi affair they called it—we stand responsible in all that we possess, to the creditors or the heirs, as if we ourselves were not the greatest losers by that charlatan of the Rue Quincampoix! Perhaps you never heard of that notorious business, nor knew of a time when all Paris went mad together, and bartered everything of price and value for the worthless scrip of a mountebank’s invention. How sorry I am, dearest Fifine, to tease you with all this; but I cannot help it. They have found—that is the lawyers—that there are two parties in existence, whose claims extend to our poor old chateau by some private arrangement contracted between my grandfather and the then Duc d’Orleans. One of these is Louis’s own son, now living at Venice; the other—you’ll scarcely believe me—yourself! Yes, my dear cousin, you possess a part right over Chasse Loups. There was a day when you might have had the whole!—not my fault that it was not so!”

“Is this a lover’s letter, or a lawyer’s, Josephine?” said my father, dryly.

“Ah, you cannot understand Emile,” said she, artlessly; “he is so unlike the rest of the world, poor fellow! But I’ll read on.

“It all comes to this Fifine; you must give me a release, so they call it, and Louis, if I can find him out, must do something of the same kind, for I am going to be married”—[she paused for a few seconds, and then read on]—‘to be married to Mademoiselle de Nipernois, sister of Charles de Nipernois. When you went, remember, as a page to the Queen, you never saw ma belle Hortense, for she was educated at Bruges. Alas, oui! so is my episode to end also! Meanwhile I’m coming to see you, to obtain your signature to these tiresome papers, and to be, for a while at least, out of the way, since I have been unlucky enough to wound Auguste Vallanme, seriously, I’m afraid—all his own fault, however, as I will tell you at another time. Now, can you receive me—I mean is it inconvenient?—will it be in any way unpleasant? Does le bon mari like or dislike us French—will he be jealous of our cousinage?’”

“On the score of frankness, Josephine, you may tell him, I have nothing to complain of,” broke in my father, dryly.

“Is it not so?” rejoined my mother. “Emile is candour

itself." She read—"At all hazards, I shall try, Fifine. If he does not like me, he must banish me. The difficulty will be to know where; for I have debts on all sides, and nothing but marriage will set me right. Droll enough, that one kind of slavery is to be the refuge for another. Some of your husband's old associates here tell me he is charming—that he was the delight of all the society at one time. Tell me all about him. I can so readily like anything that belongs to you, I'm prepared already to esteem him."

"Most flattering," murmured my father.

"It will be too late, dear cousin, to refuse me; for when this reaches you, I shall be already on the way to your mountains—are they mountains, by the way?—so then make up your mind to my visit with the best grace you can. I should fill this letter with news of all our friends and acquaintances here, but that I rely upon these very narratives to amuse you when we meet; not that there is anything very strange or interesting to recount. People marry, and quarrel, and make love, fight, go in debt, and die, in our enlightened age, without the slightest advancement on the wisdom of our ancestors; and except that we think very highly of ourselves, and very meanly of all others, I do not see that we have made any considerable progress in our knowledge.

"I am all eagerness to see you once again. Are you altered?—I hope and trust not. Neither fatter nor thinner, nor paler, nor more carnation, than I knew you; not graver, I could swear. No, *ma chère cousine*, yours was ever a nature to extract brightness from what had been gloom to others. What a happy inspiration was it of that good Monsieur Carew to relieve the darkness of his native climate by such brilliancy!

"Still, how many sacrifices must this banishment have cost you! Do not deny it, Fifine. If you be not very much in love, this desolation must be a heavy infliction. I have just been looking at the map, and the whole island has an air of indescribable solitude and remoteness, and much further distant from realms of civilization than I fancied. You must be my guide, Fifine: I will accept of no other to all those wonderful sea-caves and coral grottoes which I hear so much of! What excursions am I already planning—what delicious hours, floating over the blue sea, beneath those gigantic cliffs, that even in a woodcut look stupendous! And so you live almost entirely upon fish! I must teach your chef some Breton devices in cookery. My old tutor, who was a curé at Scamosse, taught me to dress soles "en gratin," with two simple herbs to be

found everywhere; so that, like Vincent de Paul, I shall be extending the blessings of cultivation in the realms of barbarism. I picture you strolling along the yellow beach, or standing storm-lashed on some lone rock, with your favourite pet seal at your feet.'"

"Is the gentleman an idiot, or is he only ignorant?" broke in my father.

My mother gave a glance of half angry astonishment, and resumed—"A thousand pardons, *ma chère et bonne*; but, with my habitual carelessness, I have been looking at Iceland, and not Ireland, on the map. You will laugh, I'm certain, but confess how natural was the mistake—how similar the names—how like are they, perhaps, in other respects. At all events, I cannot alter what I have written: it shall go, if only to let you have one more laugh at that silly Emile, whose blunders have so often amused you. Pray do not tell your "dear husband" of my mistake, lest his offended nationality should take umbrage; and I am resolved—yes, *Fifine*, I am determined on his liking me.'"

My father's face assumed an expression here that was far too much for MacNaghten's gravity; but my mother read on, unconcerned—"And now I have but to say when I shall be with you. It may be about the 12th—not later than the 20th—of next month. I shall take no one but François with me—I shall not even bring the dogs—only Jocassee, my monkey, for whom, by the way, I beg to bespeak a quiet room, with a south aspect. I hope the climate will not injure him; but Doctor Reynault has given me numerous directions about his clothing, and a receipt for a white wine posset, that he assures me will be very bracing to his nervous system. Yoy have no idea how susceptible he has grown latterly about noise and tumult. The *canaille* have taken to parade the streets, singing and shouting their odious songs, and Jocassee has suffered much from the disturbance. I mentioned the fact to M. Mirabeau, whom I met at your aunt's the other night, and he remarked gravely, "It's a bad time for monkeys just now—'*singerie*' has had its day." The expression struck me as a very hollow, if not a very heartless one; but I may say, *en passant*, that this same M. Mirabeau, whom it is the fashion to think clever and agreeable, is only abrupt and rude, with courage to say the coarse things that good-breeding retreats from! I am glad to find how thoroughly the Court dislikes him. They say that he has had the effrontery to tell the King the most disagreeable stories about popular discontent, distress, and so forth. I need

scarcely say, that he met the dignified rebuke such under-bred observations merited.

“‘And now, Fifine, to say adieu, until it be my happiness once again to embrace you, and that dear Carew, who must have more good qualities than I have known centred in one individual, to deserve you. Think of me, dearest cousin, and do not forget Jocasse.’”

“The association will aid you much,” said my father, dryly.

“‘Let him have a cheerful room, and put me anywhere, so that I have a place in your heart. Your dearly attached cousin,

“‘EMILE DE GABRIAC.’”

“Is that all?” asked my father, as she concluded.

“A few words on the turn-down—‘Hortense has just sent me her picture. She is blonde, but her eyes want colour; the hair, too, is sandy, and not silky; the mouth—but why do I go on?—it is not Fifine’s.’”

“Our cousin is the most candid of mortals,” said my father, quietly; “whatever opinion we may entertain of his other gifts, on the score of frankness he is unimpeachable. Don’t you think so, Miss Polly?”

“His letter is a most unreserved one, indeed,” said she, cautiously.

And now a silence fell on all, for each was following out in his own way some train of thought suggested by the Count’s letter. As if to change the current of his reflections, my father once more turned to the letter-bag, and busied himself running hastily over some of the many epistles addressed to him. Apparently there was little to interest or amuse amongst them, for he threw them from him half read—some, indeed, when he had but decyphered the writers’ names; one short note from Hackett, his man of business, alone seemed to excite his attention, and this he read over twice.

“Look at that Dan,” said he, handing the paper to Mac-Naghten, who, walking to the window slowly, perused the following lines:—

“‘DEAR SIR,—In accordance with the directions contained in your note of Friday last, and handed to me by Mr. Fagan, I placed at his disposal all the deeds and securities at present in my possession, for him to select such as would appear sufficient guarantee for the sum advanced to you on that day. I now beg to state that he has made choice of the title to Lucksleven

silver mine, and a bond of joint mortgage over a French estate, which I apprehend to form part of the dowry of Madame Carew. I endeavoured to induce him to make choice of some other equally valuable document, not knowing whether this selection might be to your satisfaction; he, however, persisted, and referred to the tenor of your note to substantiate his right. Of course, I could offer no further opposition, and have now only to mention the circumstance for your information. I have the honour to be, dear sir, respectfully yours,

“ ‘E. HACKETT.’ ”

“ Curious enough, that, Dan ! ” muttered my father.

MacNaghten assented with a nod, and handed back the letter.



CHAPTER XI.

POLITICS AND NEWSPAPERS.

THE venality and corruption which accomplished the Legislative Union between England and Ireland admit of as little doubt as of palliation. There was an epidemic of baseness over the land; and but few escaped the contagion. To whatever section of party an Irishman may belong, he never can cease to mourn over the degenerate temper of a time which exhibited the sad spectacle of a Legislature declaring its own downfall. Nor does the secret history of the measure offer much ground for consolation.

And yet, what a position did the Irish Parliament hold, but eighteen short years before that event! Never, perhaps, in the whole history of constitutional government, was the stand of a representative body more boldly maintained, alike against the power and the secret influence of the Crown; and England, in all the plenitude of her glory and influence, was forced to declare the necessity of finally adjusting the differences between the two countries.

The very admission of separate interests seemed a fatal con-

fession, and might—had a more cautious temper swayed the counsels of the Irish party—have led to very momentous consequences; but, in the enthusiasm of victory, all thought of the spoils was forgotten. It was a moment of national triumph, from which even the coldest could not withhold his sympathies. The “Dungannon Declaration” became at once the adopted sentiment of the national party; and it was agreed that Ireland was bound by no laws, save such as her own Lords and Commons enacted.

In the very crisis of this national enthusiasm was it that the Duke of Portland arrived as Viceroy in Ireland. His secret instructions counselled him to endeavour to prorogue the Parliament, and thus obtain a short breathing-time for future action. This policy, in the then temper of the people, was soon declared impossible. Mr. Grattan had already announced his intention of proposing a final settlement of the national differences by a “Bill of Rights,” and the country would not brook any delay as to their expectations.

But one other safe course remained, which was, by a seeming concurrence in the views of the Irish party, to affect that a change had come over the spirit of English legislation towards Ireland, and a sincere desire grown up to confirm her in the possession of “every privilege not inconsistent with the stability of the empire.” Mr. Grattan was induced to see the Viceroy in private, and submit to his Grace his intended declaration of rights. Without conceding the slightest alteration in his plan, the great leader was evidently impressed by the conciliating tone of the Duke, and, with a generous credulity, led to believe in the most favourable dispositions of the Government towards Ireland. The measure in itself was so strong, and so decisive, that the Duke could not say how it would be received by his party. He had no time to ask for instructions, for Parliament was to assemble on the day but one after; and thus was he driven to a policy of secret influence—the origin of that school of corruption which ultimately was to effect the doom of Irish nationality.

I am sorry to be obliged to impose upon my reader even so much of a digression; but the requirements of my story demand it. I wish, as briefly of course as may be, to place before him a state of society wherein as yet the arts of corruption had made no great progress, and in which the open bribery of a subsequent time would have been perfectly impossible.

This was in reality a great moment in Irish history. The patriotism of the nation had declared itself not less manfully

than practically. The same avowal which pronounced independence also proclaimed the principles of free trade, and that the ports of Ireland were open to all foreign countries not at war with England. It is humiliating enough to contrast the patriotic spirit of those times with the miserable policy of popular leaders in our own day; but in the names of the men who then swayed her counsels, we read some of the greatest orators and statesmen of our country—a race worthy of nobler successors than those who now trade upon the wrongs of Ireland, and whose highest aspirations for their country are in the despotism of an ignorant and intolerant priesthood.

The Duke of Portland was not ill-suited to the task before him. A man of more shining abilities—one who possessed in a higher degree the tact of winning over his opponents, might have awakened suspicion and distrust; but his was precisely the stamp and temperament which suggest confidence; and in his moderate capacity and easy nature there seemed nothing to excite alarm. “*Bonhomme*”—shame that we must steal a French word for an English quality!—was his great characteristic; and all who came within the circle of his acquaintance felt themselves fascinated by his free and unpretending demeanour.

To him was now entrusted the task of sowing schism among the members of the Irish party—the last and only resource of the English Government to thwart the progress of national independence. The Opposition had almost every element of strength. Amongst them were the first and most brilliant orators of the day—men trained to all the habits of debate, and thoroughly masters of all Irish questions. They possessed the entire confidence of the great body of the people, asserting, as they did, the views and sentiments of the country; and they were, what at that time had its own peculiar value, men of great boldness and intrepidity. There was but one feature of weakness in the whole party, and this was the almost inevitable jealousy which is sure to prevail where many men of great abilities are mixed up together, and where the success of a party must alternately depend upon qualities the most discrepant and opposite. The very purest patriotism is sure to assume something of the character of the individual; and in these varying tints of individuality, the Irish Government had now to seek for the chance of instilling those doubts and hesitations which ultimately must lead to separation.

Nor was this the only artifice to which they descended. They also invented a policy which, in later days, has been essayed with very indifferent success—which was, to outbid the

national party in generosity, and to become actual benefactors where mere justice was asked at their hands: a very dangerous game, which, however well adapted for a critical emergency, is one of the greatest peril as a line of policy and a system of government. In the spirit of this new tactic was it that Mr. Bagenal's motion to confer some great mark of national gratitude on Mr. Grattan was quickly followed by an offer of the Viceroy to bestow upon him the Viceregal palace in the Phoenix Park, as "a suitable residence for one who had conferred the greatest services on his country, and as the highest proof the Government could give of their value of such services." A proposal of such unbounded generosity was sure to dim the lustre of the popular enthusiasm, and at the same time cast a shadow of ministerial protection over the patriot himself, who, in the event of acceptance, would have been the recipient of royal, and not of national bounty. And when, in fact, the grant of a sum of money was voted by Parliament, the splendour of the gift was sadly tarnished by the discussion that accompanied it!

Enough has here been said to show the general policy of that short but eventful administration; and now to our story.

My father's reception of the Viceroy had blazed in all the ministerial papers with a kind of triumphant announcement of the progress the Government were making in the esteem and confidence of the Irish gentry. Walter Carew was quoted as the representative of a class eminently national, and one most unlikely to be the mark for Castle intrigue or seduction. His large fortune was expatiated on, and an "authentic assurance" put forth that he had already refused the offer of being made a Privy Councillor. These statements were sure to provoke rejoinder. The national papers denied that the hospitalities of Castle Carew had any peculiar or political significance. It was very natural that one of the first of the gentry should receive the representative of his Sovereign with honour, and pay him every possible mark of respect and attention. But that Walter Carew had done any more than this, or had sacrificed anything of his old connection with his party, the best contradiction lay in the fact, that his guests contained many of the very foremost and least compromising men of the Liberal party; and "Curtis" was quoted in a very conspicuous type as the shortest refutation of such a charge.

It was, unfortunately, a moment of political inaction—a lull in the storm of Parliamentary conflict—when this discussion originated; and the newspapers were but too happy to have

any theme to occupy the attention of their readers. The Castle press became more confident and insulting every day, and at last tauntingly asked why and how did this great champion of nationality—Curtis—take leave of Castle Carew? The question was unreplyed to, and consequently appeared again, and in larger capitals, followed by an article full of innuendo and insinuation, and conveying the most impertinent allusions to the antiquated section of party to which Curtis belonged.

It is notorious that a subject totally devoid of any interest in itself will, by the bare force of repetition, assume a degree of importance far above its due, and ultimately engage the sympathies of many for or against it. Such was the case here; certain personalities, that occasionally were thrown out, giving a piquancy to the controversy and investing it with the attraction of town gossip. *Falkner's Journal*, *The Press*, *The Post*, and *The Freeman*, appeared each morning with some new contribution on the same theme; and letters from, and contradictions to, "A Visitor at Castle Carew," continued to amuse the world of Dublin.

The fashionable circles enjoyed recitals which contained the names of so many of their own set; the less distinguished were pleased with even such passing peeps at a world from which they were excluded; and thus the discussion very soon usurped the place of all other subjects in public interest.

It was remarked throughout the controversy that the weight of authority lay all with the Castle press. Whatever bore the stamp of real information was on that side; and the national journals were left merely to guess and surmise, while their opponents made distinct assertions. At last, to the astonishment of the town, appeared a letter in *Falkner's Journal* from Curtis. He had been ill of the gout; and, as it seemed, had only become aware of the polemic the preceding day. Indeed, the tone of the epistle showed that the irritability consequent on his malady was still over him. After a brief explanation of his silence, he went on thus:—

"The Castle hacks have asked, why and how did Curtis take his leave of Castle Carew? Now without inquiring by what right these low scullions presume to put such a question, I'll tell them—Curtis left when he discovered the company by whom he was surrounded; when he found that he should sit down at the same table with a knavish pack of English adventurers bankrupt in character and beggars in pocket.

"When he saw the house where his oldest friend in the world was wont to gather round him all that was eminently Irish,

and where a generous hospitality developed a hearty and noble conviviality, converted into a den of scheming and intriguing politicians, seeking to snare support by low flattery, or to entrap a vote, in the confidence of the bottle; when he saw this, and more than this—that the best names and the best blood in the land were slighted, in order to show some special and peculiar attention to vulgar wealth, or still more vulgar pretension, Curtis thought it high time to take his leave. This is the why; and as to the how, he went away in the same old conveniency that he arrived by; and, though drawn by a sorry hack, and driven by a ragged Irishman, he felt prouder as he sat in it than if his place had been beside a duke in the king's livery, with a coach paid for out of the pockets of the people.

"This is the answer, therefore, to your correspondent. And if he wants any further information, will you tell him, that it will be more in accordance with the habits of Irish gentlemen if he'll address himself personally to Mr. Curtis, 12, Ely Place, than by any appeal in the columns of a newspaper.

"And now, Mr. Editor, a word for yourself and the others. I know nothing about the habits of your order, nor the etiquette of the press; but this I do know, I am a private gentleman, living, so far, at least, as you and the like of you are concerned, out of the world: I am very unlikely to fill a paragraph either among the marriages or the births; and if—mark me well, for I am not joking—you, or any of you, print my name again in your pages, except to announce my decease, I will break every bone in your body; and this 'without prejudice,' as the attorneys say, to any future proceedings I may reserve for your correspondent."

None who knew Curtis doubted for an instant the authenticity of this letter, though many at the time fancied it must be a queer quiz upon his style. The effect of it was, however, marvellous; for, in the most implicit confidence that he meant to keep his word, his name entirely dropped out of the discussion, which, however, raged as violently, if not more violently, than ever. Personalities of the most offensive kind were interchanged; and the various guests were held up, with little histories of their private life, by the journals of one side or the other.

Up to this moment my father's name had never been regularly introduced into the discussion. Regrets, it is true, were insinuated that he who could afford the shortest and most satisfactory

explanations of everything should not condescend to give the public such information. It was deplored that one who so long enjoyed the confidence of the national party should feel himself bound to maintain a silence on questions which a few words would suffice to make intelligible. Gradually these regrets grew into remonstrances, and even threatened to become reproach. Anonymous letters, in the same spirit, were addressed to him in great numbers; but they all failed in their object—for the best reason, that my father saw none of them. A feverish cold, attended with some return of an old gout attack, had confined him to bed for some weeks, so that he had never heard of the controversy; all the newspapers, filled as they were with it, having been cautiously withheld from him by the careful watchfulness of MacNaghten.

Such was the state of matters as my father, still weak from his attack, descended, for the first time, to the drawing-room. MacNaghten had persuaded my mother to accompany him on a short drive through the grounds, when my father, whom they had left in his room, thought he would make an effort to get down stairs, and surprise them on their return. He was seated at an open window that looked out upon a flower-garden, enjoying, with all an invalid's relish, the balmy air of a summer's day, and feeling as if he drank in health at every stir of the leaves by the light wind. His illness had not only greatly debilitated him, but had even induced a degree of indolent inaction very foreign to the active habit of his mind in health; and instead of experiencing his wonted curiosity to know what the world had been doing during his illness, he was actually happy in the thought of the perfect repose he was enjoying, undisturbed by a single care. The rattling of wheels on the ground at last gave token of some one coming, and a few moments after, my father heard the sound of voices in the hall. Resolved to deny himself to all strangers, he had risen to reach the bell, when the door opened, and Rutledge entered.

"Why, they told me you were in bed, Carew," cried he, endeavouring by a half-jocular manner to conceal the shock my father's wasted appearance imparted. "They said I could not possibly see you, so that I had to send up a few lines on my card to say how urgently I wished it, and meanwhile came in to await your answer."

"They only said truly," muttered my father. "I have crept down to-day, for the first time, and I'm not quite sure that I have done prudently."

"What has it been?—gout—rheumatic fever?"

"Neither; a bad cold neglected, and then an old ague on the back of it."

"And of course the fellows have bled and blistered you, without mercy. My medical skill is borrowed from the stable; hot mashes and double body-clothes are generally enough for a common attack; but rich fellows like you cannot get off so cheaply. And madam—how is she?"

"Perfectly well, thank you. And how are all your friends?"

"As well as men can be who are worried and badgered every hour of the twenty-four. It's no use in sending Englishmen here—they are never trusted! I don't believe it's possible to find an honest man, nor a truer friend to Ireland, than Portland; but his Saxon blood is quite enough to mar his utility, and poison every effort he makes to be of service."

"The children are paying off the scores of their fathers, Rutledge. The sentiment that has taken some centuries to mature, can scarcely be treated like a mere prejudice."

"Very true; but what bad policy it is—as policy—to obstruct the flow of concessions, even coming from a suspected channel. It's rather too hard to criticise them for doing the very things we ask them."

"I have not looked into a newspaper these few weeks," said my father, half wearied of the theme.

"So that you know nothing, then, of——" He stopped short, for he just caught himself in time.

"I know nothing whatever of the events that have occurred in that interval; and, however inglorious the confession, Rutledge, I must make it, I'd almost as soon live over my attack again as hear them. Take it as a sick man's peevishness or sound philosophy, as you may; but, in the jarring, squabbling world we live in, there's nothing so good as to let bygones be bygones."

"That's taking for granted that anything is ever a 'bygone,' Walter; but, faith, my experience says that we are feeling, to the end of centuries, the results of the petty mischances that befell us in the beginning of them."

My father sighed, but it was more in weariness than sorrow; and Rutledge said,—

"I came out to have a long chat with you, Walter, about various things, but I fear talking fatigues you."

"It does fatigue me—I'm not equal to it," said my father, faintly.

"It's unlucky, too," said the other, half peevishly, "one so

seldom can catch you alone ; and though MacNaghten is the best fellow in the world ——”

“ You must still say nothing against him, at least in my hearing,” added my father, as if to finish the sentence for him.

“ I was only going to observe, that in all that regards politics——”

“ Pardon my interrupting you again,” broke in my father ; “ but Dan never pretended to know anything about them ; nor is it likely that a fellow that felt the turf a contamination, will try to cultivate his morals by the intrigues of party.”

Rutledge affected to laugh at the sneering remark, and after a moment resumed,—

“ Do you know, then, it was precisely about that very subject of politics I came out to talk with you to-day. The Duke told me of the generous way you expressed yourself to him during his visit here ; and that, although not abating anything of your attachment to what you feel a national cause, you never would tie yourself hand and foot to party, but stand free to use your influence at the dictates of your own honest conviction. Now, although there is no very important question at issue, there are a number of petty, irritating topics kept continually before Parliament by the Irish Party, which, without the slightest pretension to utility, are used as means of harassing and annoying the Government.”

“ I never heard of this before, Rutledge ; but I know well, if the measures you speak of have Grattan, and Flood, and Ponsonby, and others of the same stamp, to support them, they are neither frivolous nor contemptible ; and if they be not advocated by the leaders of the Irish party, you can afford to treat them with better temper.”

“ Be that as it may, Walter, the good men of the party do not side with these fellows. But I see all this worries you, so let's forget it !” And so taking a turn through the room, he stopped opposite a racing print, and said—“ Poor old Gadfly, how she reminds me of old times ; going along with her head low, and looking dead-beat when she was just coming to her work. That was the best mare ever you had, Carew !”

“ And yet I lost heavily on her,” said my father, with a half sigh.

“ Lost ! Why the report goes that you gained above twenty thousand by her the last year she ran.”

“ ‘ Common report,’ as Figaro says, ‘ is a common liar ;’ my losses were very nearly one-half more ! It was a black year in

my life. I began it badly in Ireland, and ended it worse abroad ! ”

The eager curiosity with which Rutledge listened, suddenly caught my father's attention, and he stopped short, saying—“ These are old stories now, and scarcely worth remembering. But here comes my wife ; she'll be glad to see you, and hear all the news of the capital, for she has been leading a stupid life of it these some weeks back.”

However uneasy my mother and MacNaghten might have been lest Rutledge should have alluded to the newspaper attacks, they were soon satisfied on that point ; and the evening passed over pleasantly, in discussing the sayings and doings of the Dublin world.

It was late when Rutledge rose to take his leave, and my father had so far rallied by the excitement of conversation, that he already felt himself restored to health ; and his last words to his guest at parting were,—

“ I'll call and see you, Rutledge, before the week is over.”



CHAPTER XII.

SHOWING THAT “ WHAT IS CRADLED IN SHAME IS HEARSED IN SORROW.”

ACCUSTOMED all his life to the flattery which surrounds a position of some eminence, my father was not a little piqued at the coldness of his friends during his illness. The inquiries after him were neither numerous nor hearty. Some had called once or twice to ask how he was ; others had written brief excuses for their absence ; and many contented themselves with hearing that it was a slight attack, which a few days would see the end of. Perhaps there were not many men in the kingdom less given to take umbrage at trifles than my father. Naturally disposed to take the bold and open line of action in every affair of life, he never suspected the possibility of a covert insult ; and that any one could cherish ill-feeling to another, without a palpable avowal of hostility, was a thing above his conception. At any other time, therefore, this negligence, or indifference, or

whatever it was, would not have occasioned him a moment's unpleasantness. He would have explained it to himself in a dozen ways, if it ever occurred to him to require explanation. Now, however, he was irritable from the effects of a malady peculiarly disposed to ruffle nervous susceptibility; while the chagrin of the late Viceregal visit, and its abrupt termination, was still over him. There are little errors in the lives of the best-tempered men when everything is viewed in wrong and discordant colours, and when, by a perverse ingenuity, they seek out reasons for their own unhappiness in events and incidents that have no possible bearing on the question. Having once persuaded himself that his friends were faithless to him, he set about accounting for it by every casuistry he could think of. I have lived too long abroad; I have mixed too much in the great world, thought he, to be able to conform to this small and narrow circle. I am not local enough for them. I cannot trade on the petty prejudices they love to cherish, and which they foolishly think means being national. My wider views of life are a rebuke to their pettiness; and it's clear we do not suit each other. To preserve my popularity I should have lived at home, and married at home; never soared beyond a topic of Irish growth, and voted at the tail of those two or three great men who comprise within themselves all that we know of Irish independence. "Even idolatry would be dear at that price," cried he, aloud, at the end of his reflections—bitter and unpleasant reveries in which he had been sunk as he travelled up to town some few days after the events related in the last chapter.

Matters of business with his law agent had called him to the capital, where he expected to be detained for a day or two. My mother had not accompanied him, her state of health at the time requiring rest and quietude. Alone, an invalid, and in a frame of, to him, unusual depression, he arrived at his hotel at night-fall. It was not the "Drogheda Arms," where he stopped habitually, but the "Clare," a smaller and less frequented house in the same street, and where he hoped to avoid meeting with his ordinary acquaintances.

Vexed with everything, even to the climate, to which he wrongfully ascribed the return of his malady, he was bent on making immediate arrangements to leave Ireland, and for ever. His pecuniary affairs were, it is true, in a condition of great difficulty and embarrassment; still, with every deduction, a very large income, or at least, what for the Continent would be thought so, would remain; and with this he determined to go

abroad, and seek out some spot more congenial to his tastes and likings, and, as he also fancied, more favourable to his health.

The hotel was almost full, and my father with difficulty obtained a couple of rooms; and even for these he was obliged to await the departure of the occupant, which he was assured would take place immediately. In the meanwhile, he had ordered his supper in the coffee-room, where now he was seated, in one of those gloomy-looking stalls, which, in those times, were supposed to comprise all that could be desired of comfort and isolation.

It was, indeed, a new thing for him to find himself thus. He, the rich—the flattered—the high-spirited—the centre of so much worship and adulation—whose word was law upon the turf, and whose caprices gave the tone to fashion, the solitary occupant of a dimly-lighted division in a public coffee-room, undistinguished and unknown. There was something in the abrupt indifference of the waiter that actually pleased him, ministering as it did, to the self-tormentings of his reflections. All seemed to say, “This is what you become when stripped of the accidents of wealth and fortune—these are your real claims.” There was no deference to him there. He had asked for the newspaper, and been curtly informed, “that *Falkner* was engaged by the gentleman in the next box;” so was he left to his own lucubrations, broken in upon only by the drowsy, monotonous tone of his neighbour in the adjoining stall, who was reading out the paper to a friend. Either the reader had warmed into a more distinct elocution, or my father’s ears had become more susceptible by habit, but at length he found himself enabled to overhear the contents of the journal, which seemed to be a rather flippant criticism on a late debate in the Irish House of Commons.

A motion had been made by the Member for Cavan, for leave to bring in a bill to build ships of war for Ireland, a proposition so palpably declaring a separate and independent nationality, that it not only incurred the direct opposition of Government, but actually met with the disapprobation of the chief men of the Liberal party, who saw all the injury that must accrue to just and reasonable demands, by a course of policy thus exaggerated. *Falkner* went even further; for he alleged that the motion was a trick of the Castle party, who were delighted to see the patriots hastening their own destruction, by a line to action little short of treason. The arguments of the journalist, in support of this view, were numerous and acute.

He alleged the utter impossibility of the measure ever being accepted by the House, or sanctioned by the Crown. He showed its insufficiency for the objects proposed, were it even to become law; and lastly, he proceeded to display all the advantages the Government might derive from every passing source of disunion amongst the Irish party—schisms which, however insignificant at first, were daily widening into fatal breaches of all confidence. His last argument was based on the fact, that had the Ministry anticipated any serious trouble by the discussion, they would never have displayed such utter indifference about mustering their forces. "We saw not," said the writer, "the accustomed names of Townley, Tisdale, Loftus, Skeffington, and fifty more such, on the division. Old Roach didn't whistle up one of his pack, but hunted down the game with the fat poodles that waddle after the Viceroy through the Castle-yard."

"McCleary had a caricature of the Portland hunt this morning in his window," cried the listener, "and capital likenesses there are of Bob Uniack and Vandeleur! Morris, too, is represented by a lame dog, that stands on a little eminence, and barks vigorously, but makes no effort to follow the chase."

"Much they care for all the ridicule and all the obloquy you can throw on them," replied the reader. "They well know that the pensions and peerages that await them will survive newspaper abuse, though every word of it was true as Gospel. Now, here's a list of them alphabetically arranged, and will you tell me how many will read or remember one line of them a dozen years hence. Besides, there is a kind of exaggeration in these attacks that deprives them of credit; when you read such stories as that of Carew, for instance, throwing a main with the dice to decide whether or not he'd vote with the Government."

"I would not say that it was impossible, however," broke in the other. "Carew's a confirmed gambler, and we know what that means; and as to his having a particle of principle, if Rutledge's story be true, he has done far worse than this."

My father tried to arise from his seat; he even attempted to call out, and impose silence on those whose next words might possibly contain an insult irreparable for ever: but he could not do either; a cold sweat broke over him, and he sat powerless and almost fainting, while they continued,—

"I'd be slow to take Master Bob's word, either in praise or dispraise of any man," said the first speaker.

"So should I, if he could make it the subject of a wager,"

said the other; "but here is a case quite removed from all chance of the betting-ring."

"And what does it amount to if true?" said the other "He married somebody's illegitimate daughter. Look at the peerage—Look at one half the small sovereignties of Europe."

"That's not the worst of it at all," broke in the former. "It was the way he got his wife."

"Then, I suppose, I have not heard the story aright. How was it?"

"Rutledge's version is something in this wise:—Carew had won such enormous sums at play from one of the French princes, that at last he actually held in his hands some of the rarest of the crown jewels as pledges. One of the ministers having heard of the transaction went to the prince, and insisted, under threat of a public exposure, on an immediate settlement of the debt. In this terrible dilemma, the prince had nothing for it but to offer Carew the valuable paintings and furniture of his chateau—reputed to be the most costly in the whole kingdom. The report goes, that the pictures alone were estimated at several millions of francs. Carew at once accepts the proposition; but, as if not to be outdone in generosity, even by a royal prince, he lets it be known that he will only accept of one solitary article from the whole collection; rather, in fact, a souvenir than a ransom. I suppose, the prince, like everybody else, felt that this was very handsome conduct, for he frankly said—'The chateau, and all within it, are at his disposal—I reserve nothing.' Armed with this authority, Carew never waits for morning, but starts that night, by post, for Auvergne, where the chateau lies. I believe it is not ascertained whether he was previously acquainted with the circumstances of the prince's domestic affairs. The probability, however, is, that he must have been; for within a week, he returned to Paris, bringing with him the object selected as his choice, in the person of a beautiful girl, the natural daughter of his royal highness. Whether he married her then under compulsion, or, subsequently, of his own free will, is to this day a secret. One thing, however, is certain: he was banished from the French territory, by a summary order, which gave him barely time to reach the coast and embark. Of course, once in England, he had only to select some secluded out-of-the-way spot for a while, and there could be no likelihood of leaving any trace to his adventure. Indeed, the chances are, that Rutledge is about the only man who could have unravelled so tangled a

skein. How he ever contrived to do so, is more than I can tell you!"

My father sat listening to this story more like one whose faculties are under the dominion of some powerful spell, than of a man in the free exercise of reason. There was something in the mingled truth and falsehood of the tale, that terrified and confused him. Up to that moment he had no notion in what a light his conduct could be exhibited, nor could he see by what means the calumny could be resented. There was, however, one name he could fix upon. Rutledge, at least, should be accountable! There was enough of falsehood in the story to brand him as a foul slanderer, and he should not escape him.

By an effort that demanded all his strength, my father rose, the cold sweat dropping from his forehead, and every limb trembling, from weakness and passion. His object was to present himself to the strangers in the adjoining box, and by declaring his name, to compel them to bring home to Rutledge the accusation he had overheard. He had no time, had he even had, to weigh all the difficulties of such a line of procedure. It was not at such a moment that he could consider the question calmly and deliberately. Next to the poignant sense of injury, the thought of vengeance was uppermost in his mind; and the chances were, that he was ready to wreak his fury on the first object that should present itself. Fortunately, might I not rather say unfortunately, since nothing could be more disastrous than the turn affairs were fated to take; it seemed, however, at the moment, as though it were good fortune, that when my father by an immense effort, succeeded in reaching the adjoining box, the former occupants had departed. Several persons were leaving the coffee-room at the same instant; and though my father tried to hasten after them, and endeavour to recognise the voices he had overheard, his strength was unequal to the effort, and he sank back powerless on a bench. He beckoned to a waiter who was passing, and questioned him eagerly as to their names, and giving him a guinea, promised as much more, if he should follow them to their residences, and bring back their addresses. But the man soon returned to say, that as the strangers were not remarked by him, he had no clue whatever to their detection in the crowded streets of the capital.

It struck my father as though destiny itself pointed out Rutledge as the only one of whom he could seek reparation; and now he retired to his room, to weigh the whole question

in his mind, and see by what means, while gratifying his thirst for vengeance, he should best avoid that degree of exposure which would be fatal to the future happiness of my mother.

In this lay all the difficulty. To demand satisfaction from Rutledge required that he should specify the nature of the injury, open the whole history of the slander, and, while giving contradiction to all that was false, publish to the world a true version of an incident that, up to that moment, he had never confided to his dearest friend. Terrible as seemed the task of such a revelation, it was nothing in comparison with what he judged would be the effect upon my mother, when she came to learn the course of events which preceded her marriage.

And now this must be given to the world, with all that accompaniment of gossip and scandal such a story would be sure to evoke. Was this possible?—could he venture to embark upon such a sea of peril as this?—could he dare to confront difficulties that would rise up against him at every step and in every relation of life, to assail his political reputation to-day—to slur his personal honour to-morrow—to cast shame upon her whose fair fame was dearer to him than life itself twice told—to be an inheritance of disgrace to his children, if he were to have children? No, no! For such an exposure as this nothing short of downright desperation could give courage.

Far from serving to allay his passion for vengeance, these difficulties but deepened the channel of his wrath, and made the injury itself appear more irreparable. Nor did he know whom to consult at such a crisis. To unbosom himself to MacNaghten was like confessing that he could do, from personal motives, what he had shrunk from in the full confidence of his friendship; and such an avowal would, he was well aware, give heartfelt pain to his best friend in the world. Many other names occurred to him, but each was accompanied by some especial difficulty. It was a case which demanded great discretion, and at the same time, promptitude and decision. To have allowed any interval for discussion would have been to incur that publicity which my father dreaded beyond all.

The indignant energy of his mind had given a kind of power to his emaciated and wasted frame; and, as he paced his room in passionate emotion, he felt as though all his wonted strength and vigour were returning to “stand by him” in his hour of peril. He had opened his window to admit the cool air of the

night ; and scarcely had he thrown wide the sash, when the cry of a newsvendor met his ear.

"Here's the 'List of the Castle hacks,' to be sold to the highest bidder, the Government having no further use for them, with the pedigree and performances set forth in full, and a correct account of the sums paid for each of them."

To this succeeded a long catalogue of gentlemen's names, which were received by the mob that followed the hawker with shouts and cries of derision. Groan followed groan, as they were announced, and my father listened, with an agonizing suspense, lest he should hear his own amidst the number ; but, to his inexpressible relief, the fellow concluded his muster-roll without alluding to him. Just, however, as he was about to close the window, the man again broke out with—"On Saturday next will be published the account of the five bought in by the Crown ; and Mark Brown, Sam Vesey, William Burton, Ross Mahon, and Walter Carew will be given in full, on a separate sheet, for one halfpenny !"

A wild outburst of derisive laughter from the crowd followed and my father heard no more.



CHAPTER XIII.

A MIDNIGHT RENCONTRE.

My father had walked several streets of the capital before he could collect his thoughts, or even remember where he was. He went along, lost to everything save memory of his vengeance. He tried to call to mind the names of those on whose zeal and devotedness he could reckon; but so imbued with suspicion had his mind become—so distrustful of everything and every one, that he actually felt as if deserted by all the world, without one to succour or stand by him.

Thus rambling by chance, he found himself in Stephen's Green, where he sat down to rest under one of those great trees, which in those times shaded the favourite promenade of Dublin. Directly in front of him was a large mansion, brilliantly lighted up, and crowded by a numerous company, many of whom were enjoying the balmy air of a summer's night on the balcony in front of the windows. As they moved to and fro, passing back and forwards, my father could recognize several that he was acquainted with, and some that he knew most intimately.

Filled with one consuming thought, he fancied that he heard his name at every moment; that every allusion was to him, and each burst of laughter was uttered in derision at his cost. His rage had worked him up almost to madness, and he could hardly restrain himself from calling out, and replying aloud to these fancied insults and aspersions on his character.

At such moments of doubt as these, certainty flashes on the mind with a power of concentration and resolution that seems to confer strength for anything, however difficult. So was it to my father, as suddenly the tones of a well-known voice struck on his ear, and he heard the easy laugh of him that he hated most of all the world. It was Barry Rutledge himself, who now was leaning over the balcony, in the centre of a group, whom he was evidently entertaining by his remarks.

The bursts of laughter which at each moment interrupted him, showed how successfully his powers of entertaining were

being exercised, while at intervals a dead silence around proved the deep attention with which they listened.

It was at the moment when, by the death of the Marquis of Rockingham, a new Ministry was formed in England, and the Duke of Portland recalled from his viceroyalty, to be succeeded by Lord Temple. The changes that were like to ensue upon this new appointment were actively discussed in society, and now formed the subject of conversation on the balcony.

"You will be at large again, Barry," said one of the group; "these new people won't know your value."

"Pardon me!" cried he, laughing, "I'm handed over with Cotterell and the state coach, as functionaries that cannot be easily replaced. Let them try and manage Dublin without me! I defy them! Who knows every flaw and crack of reputation—every damaged character, and every tarnished fame, as I do? Who can tell each man's price, from knowing his weak points? Who can play off the petty jealousies of rivals against each other; disgust them with their party; and buy them cheap for the Castle? Who but Barry Rutledge? I'll offer a wager of five hundred, that there is not a family secret I can't have the key to within one week."

"What the devil ever induced you to take up such a career?" asked a deep-voiced, burly-looking country gentleman.

"The turf gave me the hint," said Rutledge, coolly. "I lost every sixpence I once possessed, when I backed this horse or betted on that one. I regained a considerable share of my loss when I limited myself to looking out for what they style 'disqualifications'—to discover that Wasp wasn't a two-year-old, or that Muffin was clean bred; that Terry had won before, and that Ginger was substituted for another. I saw that political life was pretty much the same kind of game, and that there would be a grand opening for the first fellow that brought his racing craft to bear on the great world of state affairs. I'm sure others will follow out the line, and doubtless eclipse all the cleverness of Barry Rutledge; but, at all events, they can't deny him the merit of the invention. They talk to you about skilful secretaries and able debaters; I tell you flatly I've got more votes for the Government than any one of them all, and just in the way I've mentioned. Was it Dick Talbot's convictions or his wife's losses at loo that made him join us last session? How did Rowley come over? Ask Harvey Bruce who horsewhipped him in the mess-room at Kells. Why did Billy Hamilton desert

his party? Lady Mary may tell you; and if she won't, George Gordon, of the Highlanders, can. What's the use of going through the list, from old Hemphill, that was caught cheating at picquet, down to Watty Carew, with his wife won at a game of Barocco?"

"Slanderer—scoundrel!" cried out my father, in a voice hoarse with passion; and as the words were uttered, the balcony was suddenly deserted, and the rushing sounds of many people descending the stairs together were as quickly heard. For a few seconds my father stood uncertain and undecided; but then, with a bold precipitancy, he seemed to calculate every issue in an instant, and made up his mind how to proceed. He dashed across the street towards the dark alley which flanked the "Green," and along which ran a deep and stagnant ditch, of some ten or twelve feet in width. Scarcely had he gained the shelter of the trees, when a number of persons rushed from the house into the street, and hurried hither and thither in pursuit. As they passed out, my father was enabled to recognize several whom he knew; but for one only had he any care; on him he fastened his eyes with the eager steadfastness of hate, and tracked him as he went, regardless of all others.

Without concert among themselves, or any clue to direct their search, they separated in various directions. Still my father held his place unchanged, doubtless revolving in that brief interval the terrible consequences of his act. Some fifteen or twenty minutes might have thus elapsed, and now he saw one return to the house, speedily followed by another, and then a third. At last Rutledge came alone; he walked along slowly, and as if deep in meditation. As though revolving the late incident in his mind, he stood for a moment looking up at the windows, and probably speculating in his mind on the precise spot occupied by him who had uttered the insult.

"Here, beneath the trees," said my father, in a low, but clear accent; and Rutledge turned, and hastened across the street. It will, of course, never be known whether he understood these words as coming from a stranger, or from some one of his own friends, suggesting pursuit in a particular direction.

My father only waited to see that the other was following, when he turned and fled. The entrances to the park, or green, as it was called, were by small pathways across the moat, closed by low, wooden wickets. Across one of these my father took his way, tearing down the gate, with noise sufficient to show the course he followed.

Rutledge was close at his heels, and already summoning all

his efforts to come up with him, when my father turned round and stood.

"We are alone!" cried he; "there is none to interrupt us. Now, Barry Rutledge, you or I, or both of us, mayhap, shall pass the night here!" and, as he spoke, he drew forth his sword-cane from the walking-stick that he carried.

"What!—is that Carew? Are you Walter Carew?" said Rutledge, advancing towards him.

"No nearer—not a step nearer!—or, by Heaven! I'll not answer for my passion—draw your sword, and defend yourself!"

"Why, this is sheer madness, Watty. What is your quarrel with me?"

"Do you ask me?—do you want to hear why I called you a scoundrel and a slanderer?—or is it that I can brand you as both, at noon-day, and in a crowd, adding coward to the epithets?"

"Come—come," said the other, with a sarcastic coolness, that only increased my father's rage. "You know, as well as any man, that these things are not done in this fashion. I am easily found when wanted."

"Do you think that I will give you another day to propagate your slander? No, by Heaven! not an hour!" And so saying, he rushed on, probably to consummate the outrage by a blow. Rutledge, who was in full dress, now drew his rapier, and the two steels crossed.

My father was a consummate swordsman; he had fought several times with that weapon when abroad; and had he only been guided by his habitual temper, nothing would have been easier for him than to overcome his antagonist. So ungovernable, however, was his passion now, that he lost almost every advantage his superior skill might have conferred.

As if determined to kill his enemy at any cost, he never stood on his guard, nor parried a single thrust, but rushed wildly at him. Rutledge, whose courage was equal to his coolness, saw all the advantage this gave him; and, after a few passes, succeeded in running his sword through my father's chest, so that the point actually projected on the opposite side. With a sudden jerk of his body, my father snapped the weapon in two, and then shortening his own to within about a foot of the point, he ran Rutledge through the heart. One heavy groan followed, and he fell dead upon his face.

My father drew forth the fragment from his own side, and then stooping down, examined the body of his adversary. His

recollection of what passed in that terrible moment was horribly distinct ever after. He mentioned to him from whom I myself learned these details, that so diabolical was the hatred that held possession of him, that he sat down in the grass beside the body, and contemplated it with a kind of fiend-like exultation. A light, thin rain began to fall soon after, and my father, moved by some instinctive feeling, threw Rutledge's cloak over the lifeless body, and then withdrew. Although the pain of his own wound was considerable, he soon perceived that no vital part had been injured—indeed, the weapon had passed through the muscles without ever having penetrated the cavity of the chest. He succeeded, by binding his handkerchief around his waist, in stanching the blood; and, although weakened, the terrible excitement of the event seemed to lend him a momentary strength for further exertion.

His first impulse, as he found himself outside the Green, was to deliver himself up to the authorities, making a full avowal of all that had occurred. To do this, however, would involve other consequences which he had not the courage to confront. Any narrative of the duel would necessarily require a history of the provocation, and thus a wider publicity to that shame which was now embittering his existence.

Without ultimately deciding what course he should adopt, my father determined to give himself further time for reflection, by at once hastening back to the country ere his presence in the capital was known. He now returned to the hotel, and, asking for his bill, informed the waiter that if any one inquired for Mr. Cuthbert, that he should mention his address at a certain number in Aungier Street. The carman who drove him from the door was directed to drive to the same place, and there dismissed. After this, taking his carpet-bag in his hand, he walked leisurely along towards Ball's Bridge, where already, as the day was breaking, a number of vehicles were assembled on the stand. Affecting a wish to catch the packet for England, he drove hastily to the Pigeon House, but the vessel had already sailed. It was strange enough that he never was able to say actually whether he meditated passing over to England, or simply to conceal the line of his flight. Thus uncertain whither to go, or what to do, a considerable time was passed; and he was on the point of engaging a boat to cross over to Howth, when a sudden thought struck him, that he would drive direct to Fagan's, in Mary's Abbey.

It was about six o'clock of a bright summer's morning, as my father alighted at Fagan's door. "The Grinder" was already

up, and busily engaged inspecting the details of his shop, for, however insignificant as a source of gain, some strange instinct seemed to connect his prosperity with the humble occupation of his father and his grandfather, and he appeared to think that the obscure fruit-stall formed a secret link between their worldly successes and his own.

It was with surprise, not altogether devoid of shame, that he saw my father descend from the jaunting-car, to salute him.

"I've come to take my breakfast with you, Tony," said he gaily, "and determining to be a man of business for once, I'm resolved to catch these calm hours of the morning that you prudent fellows make such good use of!"

Fagan stared with astonishment at this sudden apparition of one from whom he neither expected a visit at such an hour, much less a speech of such meaning. He, however, mumbled out some words of welcome, with a half-intelligible compliment about my father's capacity being fully equal to any exigencies or any demands that might be made upon it.

"So they told me at school, Tony, and so they said in college. They repeated the same thing when I entered Parliament; but, somehow, I have been always a fellow of great promise and no performance, and I am beginning at last to suspect that I shall scarcely live to see this wonderful future that is to reveal me to the world in the plenitude of my powers."

"It will, then, be entirely your own fault, sir," said Fagan, with an earnestness that showed the interest he felt in the subject. "Let me speak to you seriously, sir," said he; and he led the way into a room, where, having seated themselves, he went on,—“With your name, and your position, and your abilities, Mr. Carew—no, sir, I am too deeply concerned in what I say to be a flatterer—there was a great and glorious career open before you, nor is the time to follow it gone by. Think what you might be amongst your countrymen, by standing forward as their champion! Picture to yourself the place you might hold and the power you might wield. Not a power to depend upon the will of a minister, or the caprice of a cabinet, but a power based upon the affections of an entire people; for I say it advisedly, the leadership of the national party is yet to be claimed. Lord Charlemont is too weak and too ductile for it. Besides that, his aristocratic leanings unfit him for close contact with the masses. Henry Grattan has great requisites, but he has great deficiencies too. The favour that he wins in the senate, he loses in society. We want a man who shall speak for us in public the sentiments that fall from us at our

tables; who shall assure the English Government, and the English nation too, that the Irish Catholic is equal in loyalty as in courage—that his fealty is not less because his faith is that of his fathers. It is not eloquence we need, Mr. Carew. Our cause does not want embellishment. Orators may be required to prop up a weak or falling case. Ours can stand alone, without such aid! An honest, a resolute, and an independent advocate—one, whose ancient name on one side, and whose genial nature on the other, shall be a link betwixt the people and the gentry. Such a man, whenever found, may take the lead in Ireland; and, however English ministers may dictate laws, he, and he alone, will govern this country.”

My father listened with intense eagerness to every word of this appeal. Not even the flattery to himself was more pleasing than the glimpses he caught of a great national struggle, in which Ireland should come out triumphant. Such visions were amongst the memories of his boyish enthusiasm, begotten in the wild orgies of a college life, and nurtured amidst the excesses of many a debauch; and although foreign travel and society had obliterated most of these impressions, now they came back with tenfold force, in a moment when his mind was deeply agitated and excited. For an instant he had been carried away by this enticing theme; he had actually forgotten, in his ardour, the terrible incident which so lately he had passed through, when Raper rushed hurriedly into the room where they sat, exclaiming,—

“A dreadful murder has taken place in the city. Mr. Rutledge, of the Viceroy’s household, was found dead this morning, in Stephen’s Green.”

“Within the Green?” asked Fagan. “What could have brought him there after nightfall? There must have been some assignation in the case.”

“Do you know—have you heard any of the circumstances, sir?” asked my father.

“No further than that he was killed by a sword-thrust which passed completely through his chest. Some suspect that he was lured to the spot by one pretence or other. Others are of opinion that it was a duel! Robbery had certainly nothing to say to it, for his watch and purse were found on the body.”

“Have they taken the body away?”

“No, sir. It remains for the coroner’s inquest, which is to assemble immediately.”

“Had Rutledge any political enemies? Is it supposed that the event was in any way connected with party?”

"That could scarcely be," said Fagan. "He was one who gave himself little concern about state affairs—an easy fop, that fluttered about the Court, caring for little above the pleasures of his valueless existence!"

"For such men you have few sympathies, Fagan!"

"None, sir. Not one. Their history is ever the same. A life of debauch—a death of violence!"

"This is to speak hardly, Fagan," said my father, mildly. "Men like poor Rutledge have their good qualities, though they be not such as you and I set store by. I never thought so myself, but others, indeed, deemed him a most amusing companion, and with more than an ordinary share of wit and pleasantry."

"The wit and pleasantry were both exerted to make his friends ridiculous, sir," said Fagan, severely. "He was a man that lived upon a reputation for smartness, gained at the expense of every good feeling."

"I'll wager a trifle, Tony," said my father, laughing, "that he died deep in your books. Come, be frank, and say how much this unhappy affair will cost you."

"Not so dearly as it may you, sir," whispered Fagan in my father's ear, and the words nearly overcame him.

"How so?—what do you mean?" muttered my father, in a broken, faltering voice.

"Come this way, for a moment, Mr. Carew," said the other, aloud, "and I'll show you my snugger, where I live, apart from all the world."

My father followed him into a small chamber, where Fagan at once closed the door, and locked it; and then approaching him, pulled forth from beneath his loose cuff a lace ruffle, stained and clotted with blood.

"It is fortunate for you, Mr. Carew," said he, "that Raper is so unobservant; any other than he would have seen this, and this;" and as he spoke the last words, he pointed to a small portion of a bloody handkerchief which projected outside the shirt-frill.

So overwhelmed was my father by these evidences, that he sank powerless into a chair, without strength to speak.

"How was it?—how did it occur?" asked Fagan, sitting down in front of him, and placing one hand familiarly on my father's knee. Simple as the action was, it was a liberty that he had never dared before to take with my father, who actually shuddered at the touch, as though it had been a pollution.

"Unpremeditated, of course, I conclude," said Fagan, still

endeavouring to lead him on to some explanation. My father nodded.

"Unwitnessed also," said Fagan, slowly. Another nod implied assent.

"Who knows of your presence in Dublin?—Who has seen you since your arrival in Dublin?" asked he.

"None of my acquaintances, so far, at least, as I know. I went, by a mere accident, to an hotel where I am not known. By another accident, if I dare so call it, I fell upon this rencontre. I will endeavour to tell you the whole, as it occurred—that is, if I can sufficiently collect myself; but first let me have some wine, Fagan, for I am growing weak."

As Fagan left the room, he passed the desk where Raper was already seated, hard at work, and laying his hand on the clerk's shoulder, he whispered,—

"Be cautious that you do not mention Mr. Carew's arrival here. There is a writ out against him for debt, and he has come up here to be out of the way."

Raper heard the words without even discontinuing to write, and merely muttered a brief "Very well," in reply.

When Fagan re-entered the chamber, he found my father just rallying from a fainting-fit, which loss of blood and agitation together had brought on. Two or three glasses of wine, hastily swallowed, restored him, and he was again able to converse.

"Can you be traced to this house?—is there any clue to you here?" asked Fagan, resuming his former seat.

"None, so far as I know. The affair occurred thus——"

"Pardon my interrupting you," broke in Fagan; "but the most important thing at this moment is, to provide for your safety, in the event of any search after you. Have you any ground to apprehend this?"

"None whatever. You shall hear the story."

"They are talking of it outside!" whispered Fagan, with a gesture of his hand to enforce caution; "let us listen to them." And he slowly unlocked the door, and left it to stand ajar.

The outer shop was by this time filling with the small fruit-vendors of the capital—a class peculiarly disposed to collect and propagate the gossip of the day; and Fagan well knew how much the popular impression would depend upon the colouring of their recital.

"'Tis lucky," said one, "that his watch and money was on him, or they'd say at once it was the boys done it."

"Faix! they couldn't do that," broke in another; "there's marks about the place would soon contradict them."

"What marks?"

"The print of an elegant boot. I saw it myself; it is small in the heel and sharp in the toe, very unlike yours or mine, Tim."

"Begad! so much the better," said the other, laughing.

"And I'll tell you more," resumed the former speaker: "it was a dress sword—what they wear at the Castle—killed him. You could scarce see the hole. It's only a little blue spot between the ribs."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" exclaimed a woman's voice; "and they say he was an elegant, fine man!"

"As fine a figure of a man as ever ye looked at!"

"And nobody knows the reason of it at all?" asked she again.

"I'll engage it was about a woman!" muttered a husky, old, cracked voice, that was constantly heard, up to this moment, bargaining for oranges.

And Fagan quickly made a sign to my father to listen attentively.

"That's Denny Cassin," whispered he, "the greatest news-monger in Dublin."

"The devil recave the fight ever I heerd of hadn't a woman in it, somehow or other; an' if she didn't begin it, she was sure to come in at the end, and make it worse. Wasn't it a woman that got Hemphill Daly shot?—wasn't it a woman was the death of Major Brown, of Coolmines? wasn't it a woman——"

"Arrah! bother ye, Denny!" broke in the representative of the sex, who stood an impatient listener to this long indictment; "what's worth fightin' for in the world barrin' ourselves?"

A scornful laugh was all the reply he deigned to this appeal; and he went on,—

"I often said what Barry Rutledge 'ud come to; ay, and I told himself so. 'You've a bad tongue,' says I, 'and you've a bad heart. Some day or other you'll be found out; and ye see, so he was.'"

"I wonder who did it!" exclaimed another.

"My wonder is," resumed Denny, "that it wasn't done long ago; or instead of one wound in his skin, that he hadn't fifty. Do you know that when I used to go up to the officers' room with oranges, I'd hear more wickedness out of his mouth in one mornin' than I'd hear in Pill Lane, here, in a month of Sundays. There wasn't a man dined at the Castle—there wasn't a lady danced at the Coort, that he hadn't a bad story about; and he always began by saying—'He and I were old school-fellows,'"

or 'She's a great friend of mine.' I was up there the morning after the Coort came home from Carew Castle; and if ye heard the way he went on about the company. He began with Curtis, and finished with Carew himself."

Fagan closed the door here, and walking over, sat down beside my father's chair.

"We've heard enough now, sir," said he, "to know what popular opinion will pronounce upon this man. Denny speaks with the voice of a large mass of this city; and if they be not either very intelligent or exalted, they are, at least, fellows who back words by deeds, and are quite ready to risk their heads for their convictions—a test of honesty that their betters, perhaps, would shrink from. From what he says, there will be little sympathy for Rutledge. The law, of course, will follow its due path; but the law against popular feeling is like the effort of the wind to resist the current of a fast river. It may ruffle the surface, but never will arrest the stream. Now, sir, just tell me, in a few words, what took place between you?"

My father detailed everything, from the hour of his arrival in Dublin, down to the very moment of his descending at Fagan's door. He faltered, indeed, and hesitated about the conversation of the coffee-room, for even in all the confidence of a confession, he shrunk from revealing the story of his marriage. And in doing so, he stammered and blundered so much, that Fagan could collect little above the bare facts, that my mother had been wagered at a card-table, and won by my father.

Had my father been in a cooler mood, he could not have failed to remark how much deeper was the interest Fagan took in the story of his first meeting with my mother, than in all the circumstances of the duel. So far as it was safe—further than it would have been so at any other moment—the Grinder cross-questioned my father as to her birth, the manner of her education, and the position she held before her marriage.

"This is all beside the matter," cried my father, at last, impatiently. "I am now to think what is best to be done here. Shall I give myself up at once?—and why not, Fagan?" added he, abruptly, interrogating the look of the other.

"For two sufficient reasons, sir: first, that you would be needlessly exposing yourself to great peril; and, secondly, you would certainly be exposing another to great——" He stopped and faltered, for there was that in my father's face that made the utterance of a wrong word dangerous.

"Take care what you say, Master Tony; for, however selfish you may deem me, I have still enough of heart left to consider those far worthier of thought than myself."

"And yet, sir, the fact is so, whether I speak it or not," said Fagan. "Once let this affair come before a public tribunal, and what is there that can be held back from the prying impertinence of the world? And I see no more reason why you should peril life than risk all that makes life desirable."

"But what or where is all this peril, Fagan? You talk as if I had been committing a murder."

"It is precisely the name they would give it in the indictment, sir," said the other, boldly. "Nay, hear me out, Mr. Carew. Were I to tell the adventure of last night, as the bare facts reveal it, who would suggest the possibility of its being a duel? Think of the place—the hour—the solitude—the mere accident of the meeting! Oh! no, sir; duels are not fought in this fashion."

"You are arguing against yourself, Tony. You have convinced me that there is but one course open. I must surrender myself!"

"Think well of it first, Mr. Carew," said Fagan, drawing his chair closer, and speaking in a lower tone. "We must not let any false delicacy deceive us. There never was a case of this kind yet that did not less depend upon its own merits than on fifty things over which one has no control. The temper of the judge—the rank in life of the jury—the accidental tone of public opinion at the moment—the bias of the press; these are the agencies to be thought of. When Grogan Hamilton was tried for shooting John Adair in the mess-room at Carlow, his verdict was pronounced before the jury was empannelled!"

"I never heard of that case," said my father, anxiously.

"It occurred when you were a boy at school, sir; and although the facts would not read so condemnatory now, at that time there was not one voice to be heard on the side of mercy. The duel, if duel it could be called, took place after every one, save themselves, had left the table. The quarrel was an old grudge revived over the bottle. They fought without witnesses; and with Heaven knows what inequality of weapons, and although Hamilton gave himself up——"

"He gave himself up?" interrupted my father.

"Yes, sir—in direct opposition to his friends' advice, he did so; but, had he followed a different course—had he even waited till the excitement had calmed down a little—till men

began to talk more dispassionately on the subject, the result might have been different."

"And what was the result?"

"I have already told you, sir—a conviction."

"And what followed?"

"He was hanged—hanged in front of the old gaol at Naas, where the regiment he once had served in was quartered. I don't know how or why this was done. Some said it was to show the people that there was no favouritism towards a man of rank and fortune. Some alleged it was to spare the feelings of his relatives, who were Carlow people."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed my father, passionately, "was there ever such an infamy!"

"The event happened as I tell you, sir. I believe I have the trial in the house—if I have not, Crowther will have it, for he was engaged in the defence, and one of those who endeavoured to dissuade Hamilton from his resolution of surrender."

"And who is Crowther?"

"A solicitor, sir, of great practice and experience."

"In whom you have confidence, Fagan?"

"The most implicit confidence."

"And who could be useful to us in this affair?"

"Of the very greatest utility, sir; not alone from his legal knowledge, but from his consummate acquaintance with the world and its modes of thinking."

"Can you send for him? Can you get him here without exciting suspicion?" said my father, for already had terror seized hold on him, and even before he knew it, was he entangled in the toils.

"I can have him here within an hour, sir, and without any risk whatever, for he is my own law adviser, and in constant intercourse with me."

Fagan now persuaded my father to lie down, and try to obtain some sleep, promising to awake him the moment that Crowther arrived.



CHAPTER XIV.

A CONFERENCE.

SCARCELY had my father laid himself down on the bed, when he fell off into a heavy sleep. Fatigue, exhaustion, and loss of blood, all combined to overcome him, and he lay motionless in the same attitude he at first assumed.

Fagan came repeatedly to the bed-side, and opening the curtains slightly, gazed on the cold, impassive features with a strange intensity. One might have supposed that the almost deathlike calm of the sleeper's face would have defied every thought or effort of speculation; but there he sat, watching it as though, by dint of patience and study, he might at length attain to reading what was passing within that brain.

At the slightest sound that issued from the lips, too, he would bend down to try and catch its meaning. Perhaps, at moments like these, a trace of impatience might be detected in his manner; but, for the most part, his hard, stern features showed no sign of emotion, and it was in all his accustomed self-possession that he descended to the small and secluded chamber where Crowther sat awaiting him.

"Still asleep, Fagan?" asked the lawyer, looking hastily up from the papers and documents he had been perusing.

"He is asleep; and like enough to continue so," replied the other, slowly, while he sank down into an arm-chair, and gave himself up to deep reflection.

"I have been thinking a good deal over what you have told me," said Crowther, "and I own I see the very gravest objections to his surrendering himself."

"My own opinion!" rejoined Fagan, curtly.

"Even if it were an ordinary duel, with all the accustomed formalities of time, place, and witnesses, the temper of the public mind is just now in a critical state on these topics—MacNamara's death, and that unfortunate affair at Kells, have made a deep impression. I'd not trust too much to such dispositions. Besides, the chances are, they would not admit him to bail, so that he'd have to pass three, nearly four, months in Newgate before he could be brought to trial."

"He'd not live through the imprisonment. It would break his heart, if it did not kill him otherwise."

"By no means unlikely."

"I know him well, and I am convinced he'd not survive it. Why, the very thought of the accusation—the bare idea that he could be arraigned as a criminal, so overcame him here this morning, that he staggered back, and sunk into that chair, half fainting."

"He thinks that he was not known at that hotel where he stopped?"

"He is quite confident of that—the manner of the waiters towards him convinces him that he was not recognized."

"Nor has he spoken with any one since his arrival, except yourself?"

"Not one, save the hackney carman, who evidently did not know him."

"He left home, you say, without a servant?"

"Yes! he merely said that he was going over, for a day or two, to the mines, and would be back by the end of the week. But, latterly, he has often absented himself in this fashion; and, having spoken of visiting one place, has changed his mind and gone to another, in an opposite direction."

"Who has seen him since he arrived here?"

"No one but myself and Raper."

"Ah! Raper has seen him?"

"That matters but little. Joe has forgotten all about it already, or if he has not, I have but to say that it was a mistake for him to fancy that it was so. You shall see, if you like, that he will not even hesitate the moment I tell him the thing is so."

"It only remains, then, to determine where he should go—I mean Carew; for, although any locality would serve in one respect, we must bethink ourselves of every issue to this affair; and, should there be any suspicion attaching to him, he ought to be out of danger—the danger of arrest. Where do his principal estates lie?"

"In Wicklow—immediately around Castle Carew."

"But he has other property?"

"Yes! he has some northern estates; and there is a mine, also, on Lough Allen belonging to him."

"Well, why not go there?"

"There is no residence; there is nothing beyond the cabins of the peasantry, or the scarcely more comfortable dwelling of the overseer. I have it, Crowther," cried he, suddenly, as though

a happy notion had just struck him; "I have it. You have heard of that shooting-lodge of mine at the Killeries? It was Carew's property, but has fallen into my hands: he shall go there. So far as seclusion goes, I defy Ireland to find its equal. They who have seen it, tell me it is a perfect picture of landscape beauty. He can shoot, and fish, and sketch for a week or so, till we see what turn this affair is like to take. Nothing could be better; the only difficulty is the distance."

"You tell me that he is ill."

"It is more agitation than actual illness: he was weak and feeble before this happened, and of course his nerves are terribly shaken by it."

"The next consideration is, how to apprise his wife, at least, what we ought to tell her if he be incapable of writing."

"I hinted that already as I accompanied him up stairs, and by his manner it struck me that he did not lay much stress on the matter; he merely said, 'Oh! she has no curiosity; she never worries herself about what does not concern her.'"

"A rare quality in a wife, Fagan," said the other, with a smile.

Whether it was the prompting of his own thoughts, or that some real or fancied emphasis on the word "wife!" caught him, but Fagan asked, suddenly, "What did you say?"

"I remarked that it was a rare quality for a wife to possess. You thought, perhaps, it was rather the gift of those who enjoy the privilege, and not the name of such."

"Maybe you're right, then, Crowther. Shall I own to you, it was the very thought that was passing through my own brain."

"How strange that Rutledge should have hinted the very same suspicion to myself, the last time we ever spoke together," said Crowther, in a low, confidential whisper. "We were sitting in my back office, he had come to show me some bills of money won at play, and ask my advice about them. Carew was the endorser of two or three amongst them, and Rutledge remarked at the tremendous pace the other was going, and how impossible it was that any fortune could long maintain it. There was some difficulty in catching exactly his meaning, for he spoke rapidly, and with more than his accustomed warmth. It was something, however, to this effect—'All this extravagant display is madame's doing, and the natural consequence of his folly in France. If, instead of this absurd mistake, he had married and settled in Ireland, his whole career would have taken a different turn.' Now, when I reflected on the words after he left me, I could not satisfy myself whether he had said

that Carew ought to have married, in contradistinction to have formed this French attachment, or simply that he deemed an Irish wife would have been a wiser choice than a French one."

"The former strikes me as the true interpretation," said Fagan, "and the more I think on every circumstance of this affair, the more do I incline to this opinion. The secrecy so unnecessary—the mystery as to her family, even as to her name, all so needless. That interval of seclusion, in which, probably, he had not yet resolved finally on the course he should adopt. And lastly, a point more peculiarly referring to ourselves, and over which I have often pondered—I mean the selection of my daughter, Polly, to be her friend and companion. It is not at my time of life," added Fagan, with an almost fierce energy of voice, "that I have to learn how the aristocracy regard me and such as me. No one needs to tell me that any intercourse between us must depend on something else than similarity of taste and pursuit; that if we ever sit down to the same table together, it is on the ground of a compromise. There is a shame to be concealed or consoled, or there is a debt to be deferred, or left unclaimed for ever. Walter Carew's wife would scarcely have sought out the Grinder's daughter for her friend and bosom companion. His mistress might have thought such an alliance most suitable. Polly has herself told me the terms of perfect equality on which they lived; that never by a chance word, look, or gesture, was there aught which could imply a position of superiority above her own. They called each other by their Christian names, they assumed all the intimacy of sisters, and that almost at once. When she related these things to me," cried Fagan, sternly, "my passion nearly overcame me, to think how we had been outraged and insulted; but I remembered, suddenly, that there were others, far higher than us, exposed to the same indignity. The Castle was crowded by the rank, the wealth, and the influence of the whole country; and if there be a disgrace to be endured, we have, at least, partners in our shame."

"Yes, yes," said Crowther, nodding his head slowly in assent; "the whole assumes a strange and most remarkable consistency. I remember well, hearing how many of those invited on that occasion had sent letters of apology; and stranger again, the way in which the party broke up and separated has been made public enough in the newspapers. Rutledge's own words were—'It was a rout, not a retreat.' That was a curious expression."

Who has not, at some time or other of his life, experienced the force of that casuistry, which is begotten of suspicion?

Who has not felt how completely reason is mastered by the subtle assaults of a wily ingenuity, which, whilst combining the false and the true, the possible and impossible together, makes out a mock array of evidence almost too strong for a doubt? The least creative of minds are endowed with this faculty, and even the most common-place and matter-of-fact temperaments are sometimes the slaves of this delusion! To render its influence all powerful, however, it should be exercised by two, who, in the interchange of suspicions, and by bartering their inferences, arrive at a degree of certainty in their conclusions, rarely accorded to the most convincing testimony. As a river is swollen by the aid of every tiny rill that trickles down the mountain side, so does the current of conviction receive as tributary, incidents the most trivial, and events of the slightest meaning.

Fagan's spirit revolted at what he felt to be a gross insult passed upon his daughter, but this very indignation served to rivet more firmly his suspicions, for he reasoned thus:—Men are ever ready to credit what they desire to be credible, and to disbelieve that which it is unpleasant to accept as true. Now, here have I every temptation to incredulity! If this be the fact, as my suspicions indicate, I have been deeply outraged. An affront has been offered to me, which dared not have been put upon one of higher rank and better blood. It is, therefore, my interest and my wish to suppose this impossible, and yet I cannot do so. Not all the self-respect I can call to aid, not all the desire to shelter myself behind a doubt, will suffice. My reason accepts what my feelings would reject, and I believe what it is a humiliation for me to credit.

Such was, in brief, the substance of a long mental struggle and self-examination on Fagan's part—a process to which he addressed himself with all the shrewdness of his nature. It was a matter of deep moment to him in every way. He ardently desired that he should arrive at a right judgment upon it, and yet with all his penetration and keen-sightedness, he never perceived that another agency was at work all the while, whose tendencies were exactly in the opposite direction. To believe Walter Carew still unmarried, was to revive his long extinct hope of calling him his son-in-law, and to bring back once more that gorgeous dream of Polly's elevation to rank and position, which had filled his mind for many a year. His whole heart had been set upon this object. In pursuit of it, he had made the most immense advances of money to my father, many of them on inferior security. For some he had the mere

acknowledgment contained in a few lines of a common letter. The measures of severity which he had once menaced were undertaken in the very paroxysm of his first disappointment, and were as speedily relinquished when calm reflection showed him that they could avail nothing against the past. Besides this, he felt that there was still an object, to the attainment of which my father's aid might contribute much, and towards which he hoped to urge him—the emancipation of the Catholics. It had been long Fagan's cherished idea, that the leadership of that party should be given to one who united to reasonable good abilities the advantages of birth, large fortune, and, above all, personal courage.

"We have orators and writers in abundance," would he say. "There are plenty who can make speeches, and even songs for us; but we want a few men, who, with a large stake in the country, and high position in society, are willing and ready to peril both, and themselves into the bargain, in the assertion of our cause. If we ever chance to find these, our success is certain. The worst thing about our cause," added he, "is not its disloyalty, for that admits of discussion and denial; but the real plague-spot is its vulgarity. Our enemies have been cunning enough to cast over the great struggle of a nation, all the petty and miserable characteristics of a faction, and not of mere faction, but of one agitated by the lowest motives, and led on by the meanest advocates. A gentleman or two, to take service with us, will at once repulse this tactic; and until we can hit upon these, we shall make no progress."

I have been obliged to dwell even to tediousness on these traits of the Grinder; for if they be not borne in mind, his actions and motives will seem destitute of any satisfactory explanation. And I now return to the chamber where he sat with Crowther, as they compared impressions together, and bartered suspicions about my father's marriage.

"Now that I begin to consider the matter in this light," said Crowther, "it is curious what an explanation it affords to many things that used to puzzle me formerly. All that coldness and reserve towards Carew that his neighbours showed—the way his former acquaintances fell off from him, one by one—and, lastly, those strange hints about him in the newspapers. I suppose we should see the meaning of every one of them now easily enough?"

Fagan made no reply; his mind was travelling along over the road it had entered upon, and would not be turned away by any call whatsoever.

"Yes," muttered he to himself, "the little cottage at Fallrach, in the Killeries—that's the place! and the only thing now is to get him down there. I must go up and see how he gets on, Crowther. I'm half afraid that he ought to see a surgeon." And so saying, he arose and left the room.

My father was still sleeping as he entered, but less tranquilly than before, with a fervish flush upon his face, and his lips dry and dark-coloured.

With a noiseless hand, Fagan drew back the curtain; and, seating himself close to the bed, bent down to gaze on him. The uneasy motions of the sleeper denoted pain; and more than once his hand was pressed against his side, as if it was the seat of some suffering. Fagan watched every gesture eagerly, and tried, but in vain, to collect some meaning from the low and broken utterance. Rapidly speaking at intervals, and at times moaning painfully, he appeared to labour either under some mental or bodily agony, in a paroxysm of which, at last, he burst open his vest, and clutched his embroidered shirt-frill, with a violence that tore it in fragments.

As he did so, Fagan caught sight of a handkerchief, stained with blood, which, with cautious gesture, he, slowly removed, and, walking to the window, examined it carefully. This done, he folded it up; and, enveloping it in his own, placed it in his pocket. Once more he took his place at the bed-side, and seemed to listen with intense anxiety for every sound of the sleeper's lips. The fever appeared to gain ground, for the flush now covered the face and forehead, and the limbs were twitched with short convulsive motions.

At last, as the paroxysm had reached its height, he bounded up from the bed, and awoke.

"Where am I?" cried he, wildly, "Who are all these? What do they allege against me?"

"Lie down; compose yourself, Mr. Carew. You are amongst friends, who wish you well, and will treat you kindly," said Fagan, mildly.

"But it was not of my seeking—no one can dare to say so. Fagan will be my back to any amount—ten thousand, if they ask it."

"That will I—to the last penny I possess."

"There, I told you so. I often said I knew the Grinder better than any of you. You laughed at me for it; but I was right, for all that."

"I trust you were right, sir," said Fagan, calmly.

"What I said was this," continued he, eagerly: "the father

of such a girl as Polly must be a gentleman at heart. He may trip and stumble, in his imitations of your modish paces; but the soul of a gentleman must be in him. Was I right there, or not?"

"Pray, calm yourself; lie down, and take your rest," said Fagan, gently pushing him back upon the pillow.

"You are quite right," said he; "there is nothing for it now but submission. MacNaghten, Harvey, Burton—all who have known me from boyhood—can testify if I were one to do a dishonourable action. I tell you again and again, I will explain nothing; life is not worth such a price—such ignominy is too great!"

He paused, as if the thought was too painful to pursue; and then, fixing his eyes on Fagan, he laughed aloud, and added,—

"Eh, Fagan! that would be like one of your own contracts—a hundred per cent.!"

"I have not treated you in this wise, Mr. Carew," said he, calmly.

"No, my boy! that you have not. To the last hour of my life—no great stretch of time, perhaps—I'll say the same. You have been a generous fellow with me—the devil and yourself may, perhaps, know why—I do not—nay, more, Fagan—I never cared to know. Perhaps you thought I'd marry Polly. By George! I might have done worse; and who knows what may be yet on the cards? Ay, just so—the cards—the cards!"

He did not speak again for several minutes; but when he did, his voice assumed a tone of greater distinctness and accuracy, as if he would not that a single word were lost.

"I knew your scheme about the Papists, Tony, I guessed what you were at then. I was to have emancipated you!"

A wild laugh broke from him, and he went on,—

"Just fancy the old trumpeter's face, that hangs up in the dinner-room at Castle Carew! Imagine the look he would bestow on his descendant as I sat down to table. Faith, Old Noll himself would have jumped out of the canvas at the tidings. If you cannot strain your fancy that far, Tony, think what your own father would have said were his degenerate son to be satisfied with lawful interest!—imagine him sorrowing over the lost precepts of his house!"

"There; I'll close the curtains, and leave you to take a sleep," said Fagan.

"But I have no time for this, man," cried the other, again starting up; "I must be up and away. You must find some place of concealment for me till I can reach the Continent. Understand me well, Fagan, I cannot, I will not, make a defence; as little am I disposed to die like a felon! There's the whole of it! Happily, if the worst should come, Tony, the disgrace dies with me; that's something—eh?"

"You will make yourself far worse by giving way to this excitement, Mr. Carew; you must try and compose yourself."

"So I will, Fagan. I'll be as obedient as you wish. Only tell me that you will watch for my safety, assure me of that, and I'm content."

As though the very words he had just uttered had brought a soothing influence to his mind, he had scarcely finished speaking, when he fell off into a deep sleep, unbroken by even a dream. Fagan stood long enough at the bed-side to assure himself that all was quiet, and then left the room, locking the door as he passed out, and taking the key with him.



CHAPTER XV.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

IN these memoirs of my father, I have either derived my information from the verbal accounts of his friends and contemporaries, or taken it from his own letters and papers. Many things have I omitted, as irrelevant to his story, which, in themselves, might not have been devoid of interest; and of some others, the meaning and purport being somewhat obscure, I have abstained from all mention. I make this apology for the incompleteness of my narrative; and the reader will probably accept my excuses the more willingly, since he is spared the infliction of my discursiveness on topics only secondary and adventitious.

I now, however, come to a period the most eventful of his story, but, by an unhappy accident, the least illustrated by any record of its acts. MacNaghten, my chief source of information hitherto, is here unable to guide or direct me. He knew nothing of my father's movements, nor did he hold any direct intercourse with him. Whatever letters may have been written by my father himself, I am unable to tell—none of them having ever reached me. My difficulty is therefore considerable, having little to guide me beyond chance paragraphs in some of Fagan's letters to his daughter, and some two or three formal communications on business matters to my mother.

There is yet enough even in these scattered notices to show, that Fagan's hopes of realising the great ambition of his life had been suddenly and unexpectedly renewed. Not alone was he inclined to believe that my father might become the political leader of his own peculiar party, and take upon him the unclaimed position of an Irish champion, but further still, he persuaded himself that my father was not really married, and that the present conjuncture offered a favourable prospect of making him his son-in-law.

The reader has already seen from what a slight foundation this edifice sprung—a random word spoken by my father at a

moment of great excitement—a half-muttered regret, wrung from him in a paroxysm of wounded self-love.

He was not the first, nor will he be the last, who shall raise up a structure for which the will alone supplies material; mayhap, too, in his case, the fire of hope had never been totally extinguished in his heart; and from its smouldering embers now burst out this new and brilliant flame.

It was about an hour after midnight, that a chaise, with four horses, drew up at Fagan's door; and, after a brief delay, a sick man was assisted carefully down the stairs, and deposited within the carriage. Raper took his place beside him, and with a speed that denoted urgency, the equipage drove away, and, passing through many a narrow lane and alley, emerged from the city at last, and took the great western road.

Fallrach, even in our own day of universal travel and research, is a wild and lonely spot; but at the time I refer to, it was as utterly removed from all intercourse with the world, as some distant settlement of Central America. Situated in a little bend or bight of coast, where the Killeries opens to the great ocean, backed by lofty mountains, and flanked either by the sea, or the still less accessible crags of granite, this little cottage was almost concealed from view. Unpretending as it was without, its internal arrangements included every comfort; and my father found himself not only surrounded with all the appliances of ease and enjoyment, but in the very midst of objects well known and dear to him from old associations. It had been in our family for about a century; but up to this moment my father had never seen it, nor was he aware of the singular beauty of the neighbouring coast scenery.

At first, he could do no more than sit at an open window that looked over the sea, enjoying, with dreamy languor, the calm influences of a solitude so thoroughly unbroken. To an overwrought and excited mind, this interval of quiet was a priceless luxury; and far from experiencing weariness in his lonely life, the days glided past unnoticed.

Raper was not of a nature to obtrude himself on any one; and as my father neither sought nor needed a companion, they continued to live beneath the same roof almost without meeting. While, therefore, there was the most scrupulous attention to all my father's wants, and a watchfulness that seemed even to anticipate a wish on his part, his privacy was never invaded nor disturbed. A few words each morning between Raper and himself provided for all the arrangements of the day, and there ended their intercourse,

Leaving him, therefore, in the indulgence of this placid existence, I must now turn to another scene, where very different actors and interests were engaged.

The death of Barry Rutledge had created the most intense excitement, not alone in Dublin, but throughout the country generally. He was almost universally known. His acquaintanceship embraced men of every shade of opinion, and of all parties; and if his character did not suggest any feelings of strong attachment or regard, there were social qualities about him which, at least, attracted admiration, and made him welcome in society.

Such men are often regretted by the world more deeply than is their due. Their amusing faculties are frequently traced back to some imaginary excellence in their natures, and there mingles with the sorrow for their loss a sort of tender compassion for the fate of abilities misapplied, and high gifts wasted. This was exactly the case here. Many who did not rank amongst his intimates while he lived, now affected to deplore his death most deeply; and there was a degree of sympathy felt, or assumed to be felt, for his fate, widely disproportioned to his claims upon real regard.

The manner of his death still remained a profound mystery. The verdict of the coroner's jury was simply to the effect, that "he had died of wounds, inflicted by a person or persons unknown," but without an attempt at explanation. The witnesses examined deposed to very little more than the state in which the body was found, and the prints of footsteps discovered in its vicinity. These, indeed, and other marks about the spot, seemed to indicate that a struggle had taken place; but a strange and unaccountable apathy prevailed as to all investigation, and the public was left to the very vaguest of speculations, as they appeared from time to time in the columns of the newspapers.

Amongst those who accompanied Rutledge into the street, there was a singular discrepancy of opinion, some averring that they heard him called on by his name, and others equally positive in asserting that the provocation was uttered in the only emphatic monosyllable, "a lie." They were all men of standing and position in the world; they were persons of indisputable honour; and yet, strange to say, upon a simple matter of fact, which had occupied but a few seconds, they could not be brought to anything like agreement. The most positive of all in maintaining his opinion was a Colonel Vereker, who persisted in alleging that he stood side by side with Rutledge the whole time he was speaking—that he could swear not

only to the words used by the unknown speaker, but that he would go so far as to say, that such was the impression made upon his senses, that he could detect the voice were he ever to hear it again.

This assertion, at first uttered in the small circle of intimacy, at last grew to be talked of abroad, and many were of opinion it would one day or other give the clue to this mysterious affair. As to Vereker himself, he felt that he was to a certain extent pledged to the proof of what he had maintained so persistently. His opinions had gained currency, and were discussed by the press, which, in the dearth of other topics of interest, devoted a large portion of their columns to commentary on this event.

Any one now looking back to the pages of the *Dublin Express* or *Falkner* of that date, will scarcely fail to find that each day contributed some new and ingenious suggestion as to the manner of Rutledge's death. Some of these were arrayed with great details, and the most minute arrangement of circumstances; others were constructed of materials the least probable and likely. Every view had, however, its peculiar advocates; and it was curious to see to what violence was carried the war of controversy upon the subject.

By the publicity which accompanies such events as these, the ends of justice are mainly sustained and aided. Discussion suggests inquiry, and, by degrees, the general mind is turned with zeal to an investigation, which, under ordinary circumstances, had only occupied the attention of the authorities.

To any one who has not witnessed a similar movement of popular anxiety, it would be difficult to believe how completely this topic engrossed the thoughts of the capital; and through every grade of society the same intense desire prevailed to unravel this mystery. Amongst the many facts adduced, was one which attracted a large share of speculation, and this was the track of footsteps from the very opposite corner of the "Green" to the fatal spot, and their issue at the little wicket gate, of which we have already spoken. These traces were made by a large foot, and were unmistakably those of a heavy man, wearing boots such as were usually worn by gentlemen. One peculiarity of them, too, was, that the heels were studded with large nails, rarely worn save by the peasantry. A shoemaker who served on the inquest was heard to remark, that a very few country gentlemen still persisted in having their boots thus provided, and that he himself had only one such customer, for whom he had just finished a new pair that were then ready to be sent home.

The remark attracted attention, and led to an examination of the boots, which, strange to say, were found exactly to correspond with the tracks in the clay. This fact, coupled with another, that the person for whom they were made, and who had been impatient to obtain them, had not even called at the shop, or made any inquiry since the night of Rutledge's death, was of so suspicious a nature, that the boots were taken possession of by the authorities, and the maker strictly enjoined to the most guarded secrecy as to the name of him by whom they were ordered.

With every precaution to secure secrecy, the story of the boots got noised about, and letters poured forth in print to show that the custom of wearing such heels as was described was by no means so limited as was at first assumed. In the very thick of discussion on this subject, there came a post letter one evening to the bootmaker's house, requesting him to send the boots lately ordered by an old customer, J. C., to the "Blue Balls," at Clontarf, addressed, "George J. Grogan, Esq."

The shopkeeper, on receiving this epistle, immediately communicated it to the authorities, who could not fail to see in it another circumstance of deep suspicion. From the first moment of having learned his name, they had prosecuted the most active inquiries, and learned that he had actually been in town the evening of Rutledge's death, and suddenly taken his departure on the morning after. The entire of the preceding evening, too, he had been absent from his hotel, to which he returned late at night, and instead of retiring to bed, immediately occupied himself with preparations for his departure.

As the individual was one well known, and occupying a prominent position in society, it was deemed to be a step requiring the very gravest deliberation in what manner to proceed. His political opinions, and even his personal conduct, being strongly opposed to the Government, rather increased than diminished this difficulty, since the Liberal papers would be sure to lay hold of any proceedings as a gross insult to the national party.

The advice of the law officers, however, overruled all these objections; a number of circumstances appeared to concur to inculcate him, and it was decided on issuing a warrant for his arrest at the place which he had named as his address.

Secrecy was now no longer practicable; and to the astonishment of all Dublin was it announced in the morning papers, that Mr. Curtis was arrested the preceding night on a judge's warrant, charged with the murder of Barry Rutledge.

Terrible as such an accusation must always sound, there is something doubly appalling when uttered against one whose rank in society would seem to exempt him from the temptations of such guilt. The natural revulsion to credit a like imputation is, of course, considerable; but, notwithstanding this, there were circumstances in Curtis's character and habits that went far to render the allegation not devoid of probability. He was a rash, impetuous, and revengeful man, always involved in pecuniary difficulties, and rarely exempt from some personal altercation. Harassed by law, disappointed and, as he himself thought, persecuted by the Government, his life was a continual conflict. Though not without those who recognised in him traits of warm-hearted and generous devotion, the number of these diminished as he grew older, and, by the casualties of the world, he lived to fancy himself the last of a by-gone generation, far superior in every gift and attribute to that which succeeded it.

When arrested, and charged with the crime of wilful murder, so far from experiencing the indignant astonishment such an allegation might naturally lead to, he only accepted it as another instance of the unrelenting hate with which the Government, or, as he styled it, "the Castle," had, through his life long, pursued him.

"Who is it," cried he, with sarcastic bitterness, "that I have murdered?"

"You are charged with being accessory to the death of Mr. Barry Rutledge, sir," said the other.

"Barry Rutledge!—the Court-jester, the Castle-mimic, the tale-bearer of the Viceroy's household, the hireling scoffer at honest men, and the cringing supplicant of bad ones. The man who crushed such a reptile would have deserved well of his country, if it were not that the breed is too large to be extirpated."

"Take care what you say, Mr. Curtis," said the other, respectfully; "your words may be used to your disadvantage."

"Take care what I say! Who are you speaking to, sirrah? Is the caution given to Joe Curtis? Is it to the man that has braved your power, and laughed at your Acts of Parliament, these fifty years? Are you going to teach me discretion now? Hark ye, my man, tell your employers not to puzzle their heads with plots and schemes about a conviction; they need neither bribe a witness, corrupt a judge, nor pack a jury. Familiar as such good actions are to them, their task will still be easier here. Tell them this; and tell them also, that the

score they must one day be prepared to settle would be lighter if Joe Curtis was the last man they had sent innocently to the scaffold."

As though he had disburthened his mind by this bitter speech, Curtis never again adverted to the dreadful accusation against him. He was committed to Newgate, and while treated with a certain deference to his position in life, he never relaxed in the stern and unbending resolve neither to accept any favour, nor even avail himself of the ordinary means of legal defence.

"Prison diet and a straw mattress!" cried he "such you cannot deny me; and they will be the extent of the favours I'll receive at your hands."

As the day fixed for the trial approached, the popular excitement rose to a high degree. Curtis was not a favourite even with his own party; his temper was sour, and his disposition unconciliatory; so that even by the liberal press, his name was mentioned with little sympathy or regard. Besides this feeling, there was another, and a far more dangerous one, then abroad. The lower classes had been of late reflected on severely for the crimes which disgraced the county calendars, and the opportunity of retaliating against the gentry, by a case which involved one of their order, was not to be neglected. While, therefore, the daily papers accumulated a variety of strange and seemingly convincing circumstances, the street literature did not scruple to go further, and Curtis was the theme of many a ballad, wherein his guilt was depicted in all the glowing colours of verse.

It is one of the gravest inconveniences which accompany the liberty of free discussion, that an accused man is put upon his trial before the bar of public opinion, and his guilt or innocence pronounced upon, long before he takes his place in presence of his real judges; and although, in the main, popular opinion is rarely wrong, still there are moments of rash enthusiasm, periods of misguided zeal, or unbridled bigotry, in which such decisions are highly perilous. Too frequently, also, will circumstances quite foreign to the matter at issue be found to influence the opinions expressed upon it.

So far had the popular verdict gone against the accused in the present case, that there was a considerable time spent on the morning of the trial, before a jury could be empannelled which should not include any one who had already pronounced strongly on the case.

Curtis, as I have mentioned, declined all means of defence:

he thought, or affected to think, that every member of the bar was open to Government corruption, and that as the whole was an organised plot for his destruction, resistance was perfectly vain and useless. When asked, therefore, to whom he had entrusted his case, he advanced to the front of the dock, and said—"Gentlemen of the jury, the disagreeable duties you are sworn to discharge shall not be protracted by anything on my part. Whatever falsehoods the counsel for the Crown may advance, and the witnesses swear to, shall meet neither denial nor refutation from me. The Castle scoundrels shall play the whole game themselves, and whenever you agree 'what's to pay,' I'll settle the score without flinching."

This extraordinary address, uttered in a tone of half-savage jocularly, excited a strange mixture of emotion in those who heard it, which ultimately ended in half-subdued laughter throughout the court, repressing which at once, the judge gravely reprimanded the prisoner for the aspersions he had thrown on the administration of justice, and appointed one of the most distinguished members of the bar to conduct his defence.

It was late in the day when the Crown counsel rose to open his case. His address was calm and dispassionate. It was divested of what might seem to be any ungenerous allusion to the peculiar character or temperament of the accused; but it promised an amount of circumstantial evidence which, were the credit of the witnesses to stand unimpeached, would be almost impossible to reconcile with anything short of the guilt of the prisoner in the dock.

"We shall show you, gentlemen of the jury," said he "first of all, that there was a manifest motive for this crime—at least, what to a man of the prisoner's temper and passions might adequately represent a motive. We shall produce evidence before you, to prove his arrival secretly in Dublin, where he lodged in an obscure and little-frequented locality, avoiding all occasion of recognition, and passing under an assumed name. We shall show you, that on each evening he was accustomed to visit an acquaintance—a solicitor, whom we shall produce on the table—whose house is situated at the very opposite end of the city; returning from which, it was his habit to pass through Stephen's Green, and that he took this path on the night of the murder—having parted from his friend a little before midnight. We shall next, show you, that the traces of the footsteps correspond exactly with his boots, even to certain peculiarities in their make. And lastly, we shall prove his immediate and

secret departure from the capital on this very night in question—his retirement to a distant part of the country, where he remained till within a few days previous to his arrest.

“Such are the brief outlines of a case, the details of which will comprise a vast number of circumstances—slight, perhaps, and trivial individually, but which, taken collectively, and considered in regard to their bearing on the matter before us, will make up a mass of evidence, that the most sceptical cannot reject.

“Although it may not be usual to advert to the line of conduct which the prisoner has adopted, in refusing to name a counsel for his defence, I cannot avoid warning the jury, that such a course may bear an interpretation very remote from that which at first sight it seems to convey. He would wish you to accept this position as the strongest evidence of innocence; as if, relying on the justice of his cause, he requires neither guidance nor counsel!

“It will be for you, gentlemen, to determine if the evidence placed before you admit of such a construction; or whether, on the contrary, it be not of such a nature that would foil the skill of the craftiest advocate to shake, and be more effectually rebutted by a general and vague denial, than by any systematic endeavours to impeach.

“You are not therefore to accept this rejection of aid as by any means a proof of conscious innocence. Far from it. The more correct reading might show it to be the crafty policy of a man who, throughout his whole life, has been as remarkable for self-reliance as for secrecy; who, confiding in his own skill to direct him in the most difficult circumstances, places far more reliance on his personal adroitness than upon the most practised advocacy; and whose depreciatory estimate of mankind is but the gloomy reflection of a burthened conscience.”

It was so late when the counsel had concluded, that the court adjourned its proceedings till the following morning; and the vast assembly which thronged the building dispersed, deeply impressed with the weighty charge against the prisoner, and with far less of sympathy than is usually accorded to those who stand in like predicament.



CHAPTER XVI.

AN UNLOOKED-FOR DISCLOSURE.

On the second day of the trial, the court-house was even more densely crowded than on the first. The rank and station which the accused had held in society, as well as the mysterious character of the case itself, had invested the event with an uncommon interest; and long before the doors were opened, a vast concourse filled the streets amidst which were to be seen the equipages of many of the first people of the country.

Scarcely had the judges taken their places, when every seat in the court was occupied—the larger proportion of which displayed the rank and beauty of the capital, who now thronged to the spot, all animated with the most eager curiosity, and speculating on the result in a spirit which, whatever anxiety it involved, as certainly evinced little real sympathy for the fate of the prisoner. The bold, defiant tone which Curtis had always assumed in the world had made him but few friends, even with his own party; his sneering, caustic manner had rendered him unpopular; few could escape his censures—none his sarcasms. It would, indeed, have been difficult to discover one for whom less personal interest was felt, than for the individual who that morning stood erect in the dock, and with a calm but stern expression regarded the bench and the jury-box.

As the court continued to fill, Curtis threw his eyes here and there over the crowded assemblage, but in no wise disconcerted by the universal gaze of which he was the object. On the contrary, he nodded familiarly to some acquaintances at a distance; and, recognising one whom he knew well in the gallery over his head, he called out,—

“How are you, Ruxton? Let me advise you to change your bootmaker, or I wouldn’t say that the Crown lawyers won’t put you, one day, where I stand now!”

The laugh which followed this sally was scarcely repressed, when the trial began. The first witness produced was a certain Joseph Martin, the solicitor at whose house Curtis had passed the evening on which the murder was committed. His

evidence, of course, could throw little or no light upon the event, and merely went to establish the fact, that Curtis had stayed with him till nigh midnight, and left him about that hour to proceed to his home. When questioned as to the prisoner's manner and general bearing during that evening, he replied, that he could detect nothing strange or unusual in it; that he talked pretty much as he always did, and upon the same topics.

"Did he allude to the Government, or to any of its officials?" was then asked; and, before a reply could be given, Curtis cried out,—

"Yes. I told Martin that if the scoundrels who rule us should only continue their present game, nobody could regret the ruin of a country that was a disgrace to live in. Didn't I say that?"

"I must remind you, sir," interposed the judge, gravely, "how seriously such conduct as this is calculated to prejudice the character of your defence."

"Defence! my lord," broke in Curtis, "when did I ever think of a defence? The gentlemen of the jury have heard me more plainly than your lordship. I told them, as I now tell you, that innocence is no protection to a man, when hunted down by legal blood-hounds; that——"

"I must enforce silence upon you, sir, if I cannot induce caution," said the judge, solemnly; "you may despise your own safety, but you must respect this court."

"You'll find that even a more difficult lesson to teach me, my lord. I can remember some eight-and-forty years of what is called the administration of justice in Ireland. I am old enough to remember when you hanged a priest who married a Protestant, and disbarred the lawyer that defended him."

"Be silent, sir," said the judge, in a voice of command; and with difficulty was Curtis induced to obey the admonition.

As the trial proceeded, it was remarked that Colonel Vercker was seen in close communication with one of the Crown lawyers, who soon afterwards begged to tender him as a witness for the prosecution. The proposal itself, and the object it contained, were made the subject of a very animated discussion; and, although the testimony offered seemed of the greatest importance, the court decided that it was of a kind which, according to the strict rules of evidence, could not be received.

"Then you may rely upon it, gentlemen of the jury," cried Curtis, "it is favourable to me."

"Let me assure you, sir, to the contrary," said the judge,

mildly; "and that it is with a jealous regard for your interest we have agreed not to accept this evidence."

"And have you had no respect for poor Vereker, my lord? He looks as if he really would like to tell the truth for once in his life."

"If Colonel's Vereker's evidence cannot be admitted upon this point, my lord," said the Crown lawyer, "there is yet another, in which it is all-essential. He was one of those who stood beside Rutledge on the balcony, when the words were uttered which attracted his notice. The tone of voice, and the manner in which they were uttered, made a deep impression upon him, and he is fully persuaded that they were spoken by the prisoner in the dock."

"Let us listen to him about that," said Curtis, who now bestowed a more marked attention to the course of the proceeding. Vereker was immediately sworn, and his examination began. He detailed with great clearness the circumstances which preceded the fatal event, and the nature of the conversation on the balcony, till he came to that part where the interruption from the street took place. "There," he said, "I cannot trust my memory as to the words employed by Rutledge, although I am confident as to the phrase used in rejoinder, and equally certain as to the voice of him who uttered it."

"You mean to say," said the judge, "that you have recognized that voice as belonging to the prisoner."

"I mean to say, my lord, that were I to hear him utter the same words in an excited tone, I should be able to swear to them."

"That's a lie!" cried Curtis.

"These were the words, and that the voice, my lord," said Vereker; and as he spoke a deep murmur of agitated feeling rang through the crowded court.

"By Heaven!" cried Curtis, in a tone of passionate excitement, "I hold my life as cheaply as any man, but I cannot see it taken away by the breath of a false witness; let me interrogate this man?" In vain was it that the practised counsel appointed to conduct his case interposed, and entreated of him to be silent. To no purpose did they beg of him to leave in their hands the difficult game of cross-examination. He rejected their advice as haughtily as he had refused their services, and at once addressed himself to the critical task.

"With whom had you dined, sir, on the day in question—the 7th of June?" asked he of Vereker.

"I dined with Sir Marcus Hutchinson."

"There was a large party?"

"There was."

"Tell us, so far as you remember, the names of the guests."

"Some were strangers to me, from England, I believe; but of those I knew before, I can call to mind Leonard Fox, Hamilton Gore, John Fortescue, and his brother Edward, Tom Beresford, and poor Rutledge."

"It was a convivial party, and you drank freely?"

"Freely, but not to excess."

"You dined at five o'clock?"

"At half-after five."

"And rose from table about eleven?"

"About that hour."

"There were speeches made and toasts drank, I believe?"

"There were—a few."

"The toasts and the speeches were of an eminently loyal character; they all redounded to the honour and credit of the Government?"

"Highly so."

"And as strikingly did they reflect upon the character of all Irishmen who opposed the ministry, and assumed for themselves the position of patriots. Come, sir, no hesitation—answer my question boldly. Is this not true?"

"We certainly did not regard the party you speak of as being true and faithful subjects of the king."

"You thought them rebels?"

"Perhaps not exactly rebels."

"You called them rebels; and you yourself prayed that the time was coming when the lamp-iron and the lash should reward their loyalty. Can you deny this?"

"We had a great deal of conversation about politics. We talked in all the freedom of friendly intercourse, and, doubtless, with some of that warmth which accompanies after-dinner discussions. But as to the exact words——"

"It is the exact words I want—it is the exact words I insist upon, sir. They were used by yourself, and drew down rounds of applause. You were eloquent and successful."

"I am really unable, at this distance of time, to recollect a word or a phrase that might have fallen from me in the heat of the moment."

"This speech of yours was made about the middle of the evening?"

"I believe it was."

"And you afterwards sat a considerable time and drank freely?"

"Yes."

"And although your recollection of what passed before that is so obscure and inaccurate, you perfectly remember everything that took place when standing on the balcony two hours later, and can swear to the very tone of a voice that uttered but three words—'That is a lie, sir!'"

"Prisoner at the bar, conduct yourself with the respect due to the court, and to the witness under its protection," interposed the judge, with severity.

"You mistake me, my lord," said Curtis, in a voice of affected deprecation. "The words I spoke were not used as commenting on the witness, or his veracity. They were simply those to which he swore—those which he heard once—and although, after a five hours' debauch, remained fast graven on his memory, along with the very manner of him who uttered them. I have nothing more to ask him. He may go down—down!" repeated he solemnly, "if there be yet anything lower that he can descend to!"

Once more did the judge admonish the prisoner as to his conduct, and feelingly pointed out to him the serious injury he was inflicting upon his own case by this rash and intemperate course of proceeding; but Curtis smiled half contemptuously at the correction, and folded his arms with an air of dogged resignation.

It is rarely possible, from merely reading the published proceedings of a trial, to apportion the due degree of weight which the testimony of the several witnesses imposes, or to estimate that force which manner and conduct supply to the evidence when orally delivered. In the present case, the guilt of the accused man rested on the very vaguest circumstances, not one of which but could be easily and satisfactorily accounted for on other grounds. He admitted that he had passed through Stephen's Green on the night in question, and that possibly the tracks imputed to him were actually his own; but as to the reasons for his abrupt departure from town, or the secrecy which he observed when writing to the bootmaker—these, he said, were personal matters which he would not condescend to enter upon, adding, sarcastically,—

"That though they might not prove very damning omissions in defence of a hackney-coach summons, he was quite aware that they might prove fatal to a man who stood charged with murder."

After a number of witnesses were examined, whose testimony went to prove slight and unimportant facts, Anthony Fagan was called to show that a variety of bill transactions had passed between the prisoner and Rutledge, and that on more than one occasion very angry discussions had occurred between them in reference to these.

There were many points in which Fagan sympathised with the prisoner. Curtis was violently national in his politics. He bore an unmeasured hatred to all that was English; he was an extravagant asserter of popular rights; and yet, with all these, and, stranger still, with a coarse manner, and an address totally destitute of polish, he was in heart a haughty aristocrat, who despised the people most thoroughly. He was one of that singular class who seemed to retain to the very last years of the past century, the feudal barbarism of a by-gone age.

Thus was it that the party who accepted his advocacy had to pay the price of his services in deep humiliation; and many there were who felt that the work was more than requited by the wages.

To men like Fagan, whose wealth suggested various ambitions, Curtis was peculiarly offensive, since he never omitted an occasion to remind them of their origin, and to show them that they were as utterly debarred from all social acceptance as in the earliest struggles of their poverty.

The majority of those in court, who only knew generally the agreement between Curtis and Fagan in political matters, were greatly struck by the decisive tone in which the witness spoke, and the damaging character of the evidence was increased by this circumstance.

Among the scenes of angry altercation between the prisoner and Rutledge, Fagan spoke to one wherein Curtis had actually called the other a "swindler." Rutledge, however, merely remarked upon the liberties which his advanced age entitled him to assume; whereupon Curtis replied, "Don't talk to me, sir, of age! I am young enough and able enough to chastise such as you!"

"Did the discussion end here?" asked the court.

"So far as I know, my lord, it did; for Mr. Rutledge left my office soon after, and apparently thinking little of what had occurred."

"If honest Tony had not been too much engrossed with the cares of usury," cried out Curtis from the dock, "he might have remembered that I said to Rutledge, as he went out, 'the

man that injures Joe Curtis owes a debt that he must pay sooner or later.' ”

“I remember the words now,” said Fagan.

“Ay, and so have I ever found it,” said Curtis, solemnly. “There are few who have gone through life with less good fortune than myself, and yet I have lived to see the ruin of almost every man that has injured me!”

The savage vehemence with which he uttered these words caused a shudder throughout the crowded court, and went even further to criminate him in popular opinion than all that had been alleged in evidence.

When asked by the court if he desired to cross-examine the witness, Curtis, in a calm and collected voice, replied,—

“No, my lord; Tony Fagan will lose a hundred and eighty pounds if you hang me; and if he had anything to allege in my favour, we should have heard it before this.” Then turning towards the jury-box, he went on: “Now, gentlemen of the jury, there’s little reason for detaining you any longer. You have as complete a case of circumstantial evidence before you as ever sent an innocent man to the scaffold. You have had the traits of my temper and the tracks of my boots, and, if you believe Colonel Vereker, the very tones of my voice, all sworn to; but better than all these, you have at your disposal the life of a man who is too sick of the world to stretch out a hand to save himself, and who would even accept the disgrace of an ignominious death for the sake of the greater ignominy that is sure to fall later upon the unjust laws and the corrupt court that condemned him. Ay!” cried he, with an impressive solemnity of voice that thrilled through every heart, “you’ll array yourselves in all the solemn mockery of your station—you’ll bewail my guilt, and pronounce my sentence; but it is I, from this dock, say unto you upon that bench, the Lord have mercy upon your souls!”

There was that in the energy of his manner, despite all its eccentricity and quaintness, a degree of power that awed the entire assembly; and more than one trembled to think, “What! if he really were to be innocent!”

While this singular address was being delivered, Fagan was engaged in deep and earnest conversation with the Crown prosecutor: and from his excited manner might be seen the intense anxiety under which he laboured. He was evidently urging some proposition with all his might, to which the other listened with deep attention.

At this instant Fagan’s arm was tapped by a hand from the

crowd. He turned, and as suddenly grew deadly pale; for it was Raper stood before him!—Raper, whom he believed at that moment to be far away in a remote part of the country.

“What brings you here? How came you to Dublin?” said Fagan, in a voice tremulous with passion.

“We have just arrived; we heard that you were here; and he insisted upon seeing you before he left town.”

“Where is he, then?” asked Fagan.

“In his carriage at the door of the court-house.”

“Does he know—has he heard of the case before the court? Speak, man! Is he aware of what is going on here?”

The terrified eagerness of his whisper so overcame poor Raper, that he was utterly unable to reply, and Fagan was obliged to clutch him by the arm to recall him to consciousness. Even then, however, his vague and broken answer showed how completely his faculties were terrorised over by the despotic influence of his master. An indistinct sense of having erred somehow overcame him, and he shrank back from the piercing glance of the other, to hide himself in the crowd. Terrible as that moment of suspense must have been to Fagan, it was nothing to the agony which succeeded it, as he saw the crowd separating on either side to leave a free passage for the approach of an invalid, who slowly came forward to the side-bar, casting his eyes around him, in half-bewildered astonishment at the scene.

Being recognized by the bench, an usher of the court was sent round to say that their lordships would make room for him beside them; and my father—for it was he—with difficulty mounted the steps, and took his seat beside the Chief Justice, faintly answering the kind inquiries for his health in a voice weak and feeble as a girl’s.

“You little expected to see me in such a place as this, Walter!” cried out Curtis from the dock; “and I just as little looked to see your father’s son seated upon the bench at such a moment!”

“What is it?—what does it all mean?—how is Curtis there?—what has happened?” asked my father, vaguely.

The Chief Justice whispered a few words in reply, when, with a shriek that made every heart cold, my father sprang to his feet, and, leaning his body over the front of the bench, cried out,—

“It was I killed Barry Rutledge! There was no murder in the case! We fought with swords; and there,” said he, drawing the weapon, “there’s the blade that pierced his heart! and

here" (tearing open his vest and shirt)—"and here the wound he gave me in return. The outrage for which he died well merited the penalty; but if there be guilt, it is mine, and mine only!"

A fit of choking stopped his utterance. He tried to overcome it; he gasped convulsively twice or thrice, and then, as a cataract of bright blood gushed from nostrils and mouth together, he fell back and rolled heavily to the ground—dead.

So exhausted was nature by this last effort, that the body was cold within an hour after.



CHAPTER XVII.

A FRIEND'S TRIALS.

THE day of my beloved father's funeral was that of my birth! It is not improbable that he had often looked forward to that day as the crowning event of his whole life, destining great rejoicings, and planning every species of festivity; and now the summer clouds were floating over the churchyard, and the gay birds were carolling over the cold grave where he lay.

What an emblem of human anticipation, and what an illustration of his own peculiar destiny! Few men ever entered upon life with more brilliant prospects. With nearly every gift of fortune, and not one single adverse circumstance to struggle against, he was scarcely launched upon the ocean of life ere he was shipwrecked! Is it not ever thus? Is it not that the storms and seas of adverse fortune are our best preservatives in this world, by calling into activity our powers of energy and of endurance? Are we not better when our lot demands effort, and exacts sacrifice, than when prosperity neither evokes an ungratified wish nor suggests a difficult ambition?

The real circumstances of his death were, I believe, never known to my mother, but the shock of the event almost killed her. Her cousin, Emile de Gabriac, had just arrived at Castle

Carew, and they were sitting talking over France and all its pleasant associations, when a servant entered hastily with a letter for MacNaghten. It was in Fagan's handwriting, and marked "Most private, and with haste."

"See," cried Dan, laughing—"look what devices a dun is reduced to, to obtain an audience. Tony Fagan, so secret and so urgent on the outside, will be candid enough within, and beg respectfully to remind Mr. MacNaghten that his endorsement for two hundred and something pounds will fall due on Wednesday next, when he hopes——"

"Let us see what he hopes," cried my mother, snatching the letter from him, "for it surely cannot be that he hopes you will pay it."

The terrific cry she uttered, as her eyes read the dreadful lines, rang through that vast building. Shriek followed shriek in quick succession for some seconds; and then, as if exhausted nature could no more, she sank into a death-like trance, cold, motionless, and unconscious.

Poor MacNaghten! I have heard him more than once say, that if he were to live five hundred years, he never could forget the misery of that day, so graven upon his memory was every frightful and harrowing incident of it. He left Castle Carew for Dublin, and hastened to the court-house, where, in one of the judge's robing-rooms, the corpse of his poor friend now lay. A hurried inquest had been held upon the body, and pronounced that "Death had ensued from natural causes;" and now the room was crowded with curious and idle loungers, talking over the strange event, and commenting upon the fate of him who, but a few hours back, so many would have envied.

Having excluded the throng, he sat down alone beside the body, and, with the cold hand clasped between his own, wept heartily.

"I never remember to have shed tears before in my life," said he, "nor could I have done so then, if I were not looking on that pale, cold face, which I had seen so often lighted up with smiles; on those compressed lips, from which came so many words of kindness and affection; and felt within my own that hand that never till now had met mine without the warm grasp of friendship."

Poor Dan! he was my father's chief mourner; I had almost said his only one. Several came and asked leave to see the body. Many were visibly affected at the sight. There was decent sorrow on every countenance; but of deep and true affliction, MacNaghten was the solitary instance.

It was late on the following evening as MacNaghten, who had only quitted the rooms for a few minutes, found, on his return, that a stranger was standing beside the body.

"Ay," muttered he, solemnly, "the green and the healthy tree cut down, and the old, sapless, rotten trunk left to linger on in slow decay!"

"What! Curtis, is this you?" cried MacNaghten.

"Yes, sir, and not mine the fault that I have not changed places with him who lies there. He had plenty to live for; I nothing, nor any one. And it was not that alone, MacNaghten!" added he, fiercely, "but think—reflect for one moment on what might have happened had they condemned and executed me! Is there a man in all Ireland, with heart and soul in him, who would not have read that sentence as an act of Government tyranny and vengeance? Do you believe the gentry of the country would have accepted the act as an accident, or do you think that the people would recognize it as anything else than a murder solemnized by the law? And if love of country could not stimulate and awake them, is it not possible that fears for personal safety might?"

"I have no mind for such thoughts as these," said MacNaghten, sternly; "nor is it beside the cold corpse of him who lies there I would encourage them. If you come to sorrow over him, take your place beside me; if to speculate on party feuds or factious dissensions, then I beg you will leave me to myself."

Curtis made him no reply, but left the room in silence.

There were some legal difficulties raised before the funeral could be performed. The circumstances of Rutledge's death required to be cleared up; and Fagan—to whom my father had made a full statement of the whole event—underwent a long and close examination by the law authorities of the Castle. The question was a grave one as regarded property, since, if a charge of murder could have been substantiated, the whole of my father's fortune would have been confiscated to the Crown. Fagan's testimony, too, was not without a certain disqualification, because he held large liens over the property, and must, if the estate were estreated, have been a considerable loser. These questions all required time for investigation; but, by dint of great energy and perseverance, MacNaghten obtained permission for the burial, which took place with strict privacy at the small churchyard of Killester, a spot which, for what reason I am unaware, my father had himself selected, and mention of which desire was found amongst his papers.

Fagan accompanied MacNaghten to the funeral, and Dan returned to his house afterwards to breakfast. Without any sentiment bordering on esteem for the "Grinder," MacNaghten respected him generally for his probity, and believed him to be as honourable in his dealings as usury and money-lending would permit any man to be. He was well aware, that for years back the most complicated transactions with regard to loans had taken place between him and my father; and that, to a right understanding of these difficult matters, and a satisfactory adjustment of them, nothing could conduce so much as a frank intercourse and a friendly bearing. These were at all times no very difficult requirements from honest Dan, and he did not assume them now with less sincerity or willingness that they were to be practised for the benefit of his poor friend's widow and orphan.

MacNaghten could not help remarking that Fagan's manner, when speaking of my father's affairs, was characterised by a more than common caution and reserve, and that he strenuously avoided entering upon anything which bore, however remotely, upon the provision my mother was to enjoy, or what arrangements were to be made respecting myself.

"There was a will, he thought, in Crowther's possession; but it was of the less consequence, since the greater part—nearly all—of the Carew property was under the strictest entail."

"The boy will be rich, one of the richest men in Ireland, if he lives," said MacNaghten; but Fagan made no reply for some time, and at last said,—

"If there be not good sense and moderation exercised on all sides, the Carews may gain less than will the Court of Chancery."

MacNaghten felt far from reassured by the cautious and guarded reserve of Fagan's manner; he saw that in the dry, sententious tone of his remarks there lurked difficulties, and perhaps troubles; but he resolved to devote himself to the task before him, in a spirit of patience and calm industry, which, unhappily for him, he had never brought to bear upon his own worldly fortunes.

"There is nothing either obtrusive or impertinent," said he, at last, to Fagan, "in my making these inquiries, for, independently of poor Walter's affection for me, I know that he always expected me to take the management of his affairs, should I survive him; and if there be a will, it is almost certain that I am named his executor in it."

Fagan nodded affirmatively, and merely said,—

“Crowther will be able to clear up this point.”

“And when shall we see him?”

“He is in the country, down south, I think, at this moment; but he will be up by the end of the week. However, there are so many things to be done, that his absence involves no loss of time. Where shall I address you, if I write?”

“I shall return to Castle Carew this evening; and in all probability remain there till I hear from you.”

“That will do,” was the dry answer; and MacNaghten took his leave, more than ever puzzled by the Grinder's manner, and wondering within himself in what shape and from what quarter might come the storm, which he convinced himself could not be distant.

Grief for my father's death, and anxiety for my poor mother's fate, were, however, the uppermost thoughts in his mind; and as he drew nigh Castle Carew, his heart was so much overpowered by the change which had fallen upon that once happy home, that he totally forgot all the dark hints and menacing intimations of his late interview.

It was truly a gloom stricken mansion. The servants moved about sadly, conversing in low whispers; save in one quarter all the windows were closed, and the rooms locked up—not a voice nor a footstep was to be heard. Mourning and woe were imprinted on every face, and in every gesture. MacNaghten knew not where to go, nor where to stay. Every chamber he entered was full of its memories of the past, and he wandered on from room to room, seeking some spot which should not remind him of days whose happiness could never return. In this random search he suddenly entered the chamber where M. de Gabriac lay at full length upon a sofa, enjoying, in all the ease of a loose dressing-gown, the united pleasures of a French novel and a bottle of Bordeaux. MacNaghten would willingly have returned at once. Such a scene and such companionship were not to his taste, but the other quickly detected him, and called out,—

“Ah! M. MacNaghten, how delighted am I to see you again! What days of misery and gloom have I been passing here—no one to speak to—none to sit with.”

“It is, indeed, a sad mansion,” sighed MacNaghten, heavily.

“So, then, it is all true?” asked the other. “Poor fellow, what a sensitive nature—how impressible. To die just for a matter of sentiment; for, after all, you know it was a sentiment, nothing else. Every man has had his affairs of this kind

few go through life without something unpleasant; but one does not die broken-hearted for all that. No, *par bleu*, that is a very poor philosophy. Tell me about the duel—I am greatly interested to hear the details.”

To escape as far as possible any further moralisings of his companion, Dan related all that he knew of the fatal rencontre, answering, so well as he might, all the Frenchman’s questions, and, at the same time, avoiding all reference to the provocation which led to the meeting.

“It was a mistake, a great mistake, to fight in this fashion,” said Gabriac, coldly. “There is an etiquette to be observed in a duel as in a dinner; and you can no more hurry over one than the other, without suffering for it afterwards. Maybe, these are, however, the habits of the country.”

MacNaghten calmly assured him that they were not.

“Then the offence must have been an outrage—what was it?”

“Some expression of gross insult; I forget the exact nature of it.”

“Poor fellow,” said the other, sipping his wine, “with so much to live for: a magnificent chateau, a pretty wife, and a good fortune. What folly, was it not?”

MacNaghten afterwards acknowledged that even the Grinder’s sententious dryness was preferable to the heartless indifference of the Frenchman’s manner; but a deferential regard for her whose relative he was, restrained him from all angry expression of feeling on the subject, and he suffered him to discuss the duel and all its consequences, without the slightest evidence of the suffering it cost him.

“Josephine will not be sorry to leave it,” said Gabriac, after a short silence. “She told me that they never understood her, nor she them; and after all, you know,” said he, smiling, “there is but one France!”

“And but one Ireland!” said MacNaghten, heartily.

“*Hereusement!*” muttered the Frenchman, but employing a word which, happily, the other did not understand.

“Her state is one of great danger still,” said Dan, alluding to my mother.

“They say so; but that is always the way with doctors. One may die of violent anger, rage, ungratified vengeance, jealousy, but not of mere grief. Sorrow is rather a soothing passion—don’t you think so?”

Had MacNaghten been in the mood, he might have laughed at the remark, but now it only irritated and incensed him; and

to such an extent did the heartless manner of the Frenchman grate upon his feelings, that he was in momentary danger of including my poor mother in the depreciatory estimate he conceived of France, and all that belonged to it. Nor was his temper improved by the inquiries of Gabriac concerning the property and estates of my father; in fact, unable any longer to continue a conversation, every portion of which was an outrage, he arose abruptly, and wishing him a good night, left the room.

"Poor Walter," said he, as he slowly sauntered along towards his chamber, "is it to such as these your memory is to be entrusted, and your name and fortune bequeathed?" And with this gloomy reflection, he threw himself upon his bed, to pass a sad and a sleepless night.

It was in a curious reverie—a kind of inquiring within himself, "How came it that qualites so calculated to make social intercourse delightful in days of happiness, should prove positively offensive in moments of trial and affliction?" for such he felt to be the case as regarded Gabriac—that MacNaghten lay, when a servant came to inform him that Mr. Crowther had just arrived at the Castle, and earnestly requested to see him.

"At once," replied he, "show him up to me here;" and in a few moments that most bland and imperturbable of solicitors entered, and, drawing a chair to the bed-side, sat down.

"This is a sad occasion, Mr. MacNaghten. I little thought when I last saw you here, that my next visit would have been on such an errand."

MacNaghten nodded sorrowfully, and Crowther went on,—

"Sad in every sense, sir," sighed he, heavily. "The last of his name—one of our oldest gentry—the head of a princely fortune—with abilities, I am assured, of a very high order, and, certainly, most popular manners."

"You may spare me the eulogy," said MacNaghten, bluntly. "He was a better fellow than either you or I should be able to describe, if we spent an hour over it."

Crowther took the rebuke in good part, and assented to the remark with the best possible grace. Still he seemed as if he would like to dwell a little longer on the theme before he proceeded to other matters. Perhaps he thought by this to secure a more favourable acceptance for what he had to say; perhaps he was not fully made up in mind how to approach the subject before him. MacNaghten, who always acted through life as he would ride in a steeple-chase, straight onward, regardless of all in his way, stopped him short, by saying,—

"Carew has left a will in your hands, I believe?"

"You can scarcely call it a will, sir. The document is very irregular—very informal."

"It was his act, however; he wrote or dictated it himself?"

"Not even that, sir. He suggested parts of it—made trifling corrections with his own pen—approved some portions, and left others for after-consideration."

"It is, at all events, the only document of the kind in existence?"

"That would be too much to affirm, sir."

"I mean that you, at least, know of no other; in fact, I want to hear whether you conceive it to be sufficient for its object, as explaining Carew's wishes and intentions."

A dubious half-smile, and a still more dubious shake of the head, seemed to infer that this view of the subject was far too sweeping and comprehensive.

"Come, come," said Dan, good humouredly, "I'm not the Chancellor, nor even Master of the Rolls. Even a little indiscretion will never injure your reputation in talking with me. Just tell me frankly what you know and think about my poor friend's affairs. His widow, if she ever recover, which is very doubtful, is but little suited to matters of business; and as it is not a case where any adverse litigation is to be apprehended—what do you mean by that shake of the head? You surely would not imply that the estate, or any part of it, could be contested at law?"

"Who could say as much for any property, sir?" said Crowther, sententiously.

"I know that; I am well aware that there are fellows in your tribe, who are always on the look-out for a ship wrecked fortune, that they may earn the salvage for saving it; but here, if I mistake not very much, is an estate that stands in need of no such aids. Carew may have debts."

"Very large debts—debts of great amount, indeed!"

"Well, be it so; there ends the complication."

"You have a very concise and, I must say, a most straightforward mode of regarding a subject, sir," said Crowther, blandly. "There is an admirable clearness in your views, and a most business-like promptitude in your deductions; but we, poor moles of the law, are condemned to work in a very different fashion—and, to be brief, here is a case that requires the very nicest management. To enable Madame Carew to take out letters of administration to her late husband's property, we

must prove her marriage. Now, so far as I can see, sir, this is a matter of considerable difficulty."

"Why, you would not dare to assert—to insinuate even——"

"Nothing of the kind, sir. Pray, be calm, Mr. MacNaghten. I am as incapable of such a thought as yourself. Of the fact, I entertain no more doubt than you do. The proof of it—the legal proof, however, I am most anxious to obtain."

"But, with search amongst his papers——"

"Very true, sir; it may be discovered. I have no doubt it will be discovered. I only mean to say that such a document is not to be met with amongst those in my hands, and I have very carefully gone over a large packet, labelled 'Papers and letters relating to France during my last residence there in '80-'81,' which you may remember was the period of his marriage."

"But he alludes to that event?"

"Not once, sir; there is not a single passage that even bears upon it. There are adventures of various kinds, curious incidents, many of them in love, play, and gallantry; but of marriage, or even of any speculation on the subject, not the remotest mention."

"This is most singular!"

"Is it not so, sir? But I have thought, perhaps, that you, who were always his most attached friend—you, at least, possessed some letters which should throw light upon this matter, even to indicate the exact date of it, where it occurred, who the witnesses."

"Not a line, not a syllable," said MacNaghten, with a sigh.

"This is more unfortunate than I expected," said Crowther. "I always said to myself, 'Well, in his private correspondence, in the close relations of friendship, we shall come upon some clue to the mystery.' I always understood that with you he was frankness itself, sir?"

"So he was," rejoined MacNaghten.

"This reserve is therefore the more remarkable still. Can you account for it in any way, sir?"

"Why should I account for it?" cried Dan, passionately. "My friend had his own reasons for whatever he did—good and sufficient ones, I'll be sworn."

"I feel assured of that, sir, don't mistake me for a moment, or suppose I am impugning them. I merely desired to learn if you could, from your intimate knowledge of your friend's character, trace this reserve on his part to any distinct cause."

"My knowledge of him goes this far," said MacNaghten,

haughtily, "that he had an honourable motive for every act of his life."

It required some address on Crowther's part to bring back MacNaghten to that calm and deliberate tone of mind which the subject demanded. After a while, however, he perfectly succeeded; and Dan arose and accompanied him to the library, where they both proceeded to search among my father's papers, with which several boxes were filled.



CHAPTER XVIII.

DISAPPOINTMENTS.

THE search for any document that could authenticate my father's marriage proved totally unsuccessful, and, although poor MacNaghten's zeal was untiring and unwearied, all his efforts were fruitless.

Guided by the clue afforded in some of my father's letters, Dan proceeded to Wales, ascertained the cottage where they had passed their first month of married life, and found out many who had known them by sight; but could chance upon nothing which should lead him to the important fact, where, and by whom, the marriage ceremony was solemnized.

The state of my mother's health was so precarious for a long time, as to render all inquiry from her impracticable; while there was also a very natural fear of the consequences that might ensue, were she to suspect the object of any investigation, and learn the perilous position in which she stood. Her condition was, indeed, a pitiable one—a young and widowed mother; a stranger in a foreign land, of whose language she knew scarcely anything; without one friend of her own sex, separated by what, in those days, seemed an immense distance from all belonging to her. It was a weary load of misfortune to be borne by one who, till that moment, had never known a sorrow.

Nor was MacNaghten's lot more enviable, as, day by day,

he received packets of letters detailing the slow but steady march of those legal proceedings, which were to end in the ruin of those whom he felt to have been bequeathed to his friendship. Already two claimants for the estate had appeared in the field—one, a distant relation of my father, a very rich southern baronet, a certain Carew O'Moore; the other, an unknown, obscure person, whose pretensions, it was said, were favoured by Fagan, and at whose cost the suit was said to be maintained. With the former, MacNaghten at once proceeded to open relations personally, by a letter, describing in simple but touching terms the sad state in which my poor mother yet lay, and appealing to his feelings as a gentleman, and a man of humanity, to stay the course of proceedings for a while, at least, and give time to enable her to meet them by such information as she might possess.

A very polite reply was, at once, returned to this, assuring MacNaghten that whatever delays could be accorded to the law proceedings—short of defeating the object altogether—should certainly be accorded; that nothing was further from Sir Carew's desire than to increase, in the slightest, the sorrows of one so heavily visited; and expressing, in conclusion, a regret that his precarious health should preclude him paying his personal visit of condolence at the Castle, where, he trusted, the lady would continue to reside so long as her health or convenience made it desirable. If the expressions of the letter were not as hearty and generous as honest Dan might have wished them, they were more gratifying than the note he received from Fagan, written with all the caution and reserve of the Grinder's manner; for, while not going so far as to admit that he was personally interested and concerned for the new claimant, he guardedly avoided giving any denial to the fact.

For three weeks did MacNaghten continue to search through immense masses of papers and documents; he ransacked musty drawers of mustier cabinets; he waded through piles of correspondence, in the hope of some faint flickering of light, some chance phrase that might lead him to the right track, but without success! He employed trusty and sharp-witted agents to trace back, through England, the journey my father and mother had come by, but so secretly had every step of that wedding tour been conducted, that no clue remained.

Amidst the disappointments of this ineffectual pursuit, there came, besides, the disheartening reflection, that from those who were most intimately acquainted with my father's affairs, he met neither counsel nor co-operation. On the contrary, Crowther's

manner was close and secret on every matter of detail, and as to the chances of a suit, avowed how little ground they had for resistance. Fagan even went further, and spoke with an assumed regret, that my father should have made no provision for those belonging to him.

All these were, however, as nothing to the misery of that day in which MacNaghten was obliged to break the disclosure to my mother, and explain to her the position of ruin and humiliation in which she was placed! She was still weak and debilitated from her illness, her bodily strength impaired, and her mind broken by suffering, when this new shock came upon her; nor could she at first be made to understand the full measure of her misfortune, nor to what it exactly tended. That the home of her husband was no longer to be hers was a severe blow. It was endeared to her by so many of the tenderest recollections. It was all that really remained associated with him she had lost. "But, perhaps," thought she, "this is the law of the country: such are the inevitable necessities of the land." Her boy would, if he lived, one day possess it for his own, and upon this thought she fell back for consolation.

MacNaghten did not venture in his first interview to undeceive her; a second and even a third passed over without his being equal to the task; but the inexorable course of law gave, at last, no time for further delay. The tenants of the estate had received formal notice to pay the amount of their several holdings into court pending the litigation of the property. A peremptory order to surrender the house and demense was also issued. The servants talked openly of the approaching break-up of the household, and already vague and shadowy rumours ran, that my father had died intestate, and that my mother was left without a shilling.

From early morning till late at night, MacNaghten had toiled without ceasing. He had visited lawyers—attended consultations—instituted fresh searches through Crowther's papers, but all with the same result. The most hopeful counsels only promised a barren resistance, the less sanguine advisers recommended any compromise that might secure to my mother some moderate competence to live on. So much had the course of events preyed upon his mind, and so dispirited had he grown, that, as he afterwards owned, he found himself listening to arguments, and willing to entertain projects, which, had they been presented but a few weeks before, he had rejected with scorn and indignation. It was then, too, and for the first time, that the possibility struck him that my father's marriage might

have been solemnized without that formality which should make it good in law. He remembered the reserve with which, in all their frank friendship, the subject was ever treated. He bethought him of the reluctance with which my father suffered himself to be drawn into any allusion to that event; and that, in fact, it was the only theme on which they never conversed in perfect frankness and sincerity.

"After all," thought he, "the matter may be difficult of proof. There may have been reasons, real or imaginary, for secrecy; there may have been certain peculiar circumstances requiring unusual caution or mystery; but Watty was quite incapable of presenting to his friends and to the world as his wife, one who had not every title to the name, while she, who held that place, gave the best guarantee, by her manner and conduct, that it was hers by right." To this consolation he was obliged to fall back at each new moment of discomfiture; but, although it served to supply him with fresh energy and courage, it also oppressed him with the sad reflection, that conviction and belief in his friend's honour would have no weight in the legal discussion of the case, and that one scrawled fragment of paper would be better in evidence than all the trustfulness that was ever inspired by friendship.

If gifted with a far more than common amount of resolution and energy, MacNaghten was by nature impulsive to rashness, and consequently not well suited to deal with those who, more cautious by temperament, and less given to exhibit their feelings, find their profit in trading upon the warmer and less suspicious natures of others. In proportion as his daily disappointment preyed upon him, he displayed the effect in his manner and appearance, and at length between mental agitation and bodily fatigue, became the mere wreck of what he had been. It was thus, that after a long day passed in toil and excitement, he strolled into one of the squares after nightfall, to seek in the solitude of the spot some calm and tranquillity for his harassed spirit.

It was the autumn—that season when Dublin is almost deserted by its residents, and scarcely any of those who constitute what is called society were in the capital. MacNaghten therefore, was not likely to find any to interfere with the loneliness he sought for, and loitered unmolested for hours through the lanes and alleys of the silent square. There was a certain freshness in the night air that served to rally his jaded frame; and he felt, in the clear and half-frosty atmosphere, a sense of invigoration that made him unwilling to leave the spot. While

thus gathering strength for the coming day, he thought he heard footsteps in the walk behind him; he listened, and now distinctly heard the sound of a voice talking in loud tones, and the shuffling sounds of feet on the gravel. Stepping aside into the copse, he waited to see who and for what purpose might they be, who came there at this unfrequented hour.

To his astonishment, a solitary figure moved past, walking with short hasty steps, while he talked and gesticulated to himself with every appearance of intense excitement. MacNaghten had but to hear a word or two, at once to recognize the speaker as Curtis—that strange, half-misanthropic creature, who, partly from fault, and in part from misfortune, now lived in a state of friendless isolation.

It was rumoured that, although his bearing and manner before the Court displayed consummate coolness and self-possession, that the effect of the recent trial had been to shake his intellect seriously, and, while impressing upon him more strongly the notion of his being selected and marked out for persecution by the Government, to impart to him a kind of martyr's determination to perish in the cause. At no time were he and Dan congenial spirits. Their natures and their temperaments were widely different; and, from the great disparity in their ages, as well as in all their associations, there was scarcely one point of friendly contact in common to them.

There is a companionable element in misfortune, however, stronger than what we discover in prosperity; and partly from this cause, and partly from a sense of compassion, MacNaghten followed him quickly, and hailed him by his name.

"Joe Curtis!" repeated the old man, stopping suddenly. "I submit, my lord, that this is an insufficient designation. I am Joseph Curtis, Esquire, of Meagh-valley House."

"With all my heart," said MacNaghten, cordially taking his hand and shaking it warmly, "though I think you'll suffer an old friend to be less ceremonious with you."

"Ah! you here, Dan MacNaghten—why, what in the name of all mischief has led you to this place? I thought I was the only maniac in this ward;" and he gave a harsh, grating laugh of irony at his own jesting allusion.

"I came here partly by accident, and have loitered from choice."

"We must take care that no gentlemen have fixed this evening for a meeting here," said Curtis, in a low guarded whisper.

"You and I, MacNaghten, would fare badly—depend upon it. What! with our known reputations, and the nails in our boots—eh! the nails in our boots—they'll make what's called a strong case against us! You'd get off—they've nothing against you; but they'll not let me slip through, like last time. Did you ever know such a close thing? The foreman, old Andrews, told me since, 'We had quite made up our minds, sir. We'd have said guilty without leaving the box.' Just think of their dilemma if they had hanged me! My papers, for I took care to leave all in writing, would have shown up the whole conspiracy. I've set forth the game they have been playing since the year '42. I detailed all their machinations, and showed the secret orders they had given to each successive Viceroy. There were three men—only three men—in all Ireland that they dreaded! And that blundering fool, Carew, must rush in with his rashness and absurdity! Who ever heard or saw the like?"

"Poor fellow!" muttered MacNaghten.

"'Poor fellow,' as much as you wish, sir; but remember that some degree of consideration is due to me also! I was a prisoner seven weeks in Newgate; I stood in the dock, arraigned for a murder; I was on the eve of a false conviction, and a false sentence, and there is no man living can say what results might not have followed on my being falsely executed! Your friend's stupid interference has spoiled everything, and you needn't ask me, at least, to feel grateful to him."

"There are men who, in your situation that day, would not hesitate to acknowledge their gratitude, notwithstanding," said MacNaghten.

"There are poor-spirited, contemptible curs in every country, sir, if you mean that!" said Curtis. "As for Carew, he was a gentleman by birth. He had the fortune and the education of one. He might, if he had wished it, have been one of the first, if not the very first, men in this country. He thought it a finer thing to be a horse-racer and a gambler. He saw greater distinction in being the dangler at the court of a foreign debauchee, to being the leading character in his own land. Don't interrupt me, sir," cried he, haughtily, waving his hand, while he went on with increased vehemence. "I tell you again, that Walter Carew might now have been a great living patriot—instead of——"

"If you utter one syllable of insult to his memory," broke in MacNaghten, boldly, "neither your age nor your folly shall save you—for, by Heaven——"

He stopped—for the aspect of the broken-down, white-haired figure in front of him, suddenly overcame him with shame for his own violence.

"Well, and what then?" said Curtis, calmly. "Shall I finish your threat for you? for, in truth, you seem quite unable to do so yourself. No, I'll not—Dan MacNaghten—never fear me. I'm just as incapable of defaming him who has left us, as you are of offering insult to an old, decrepit, half-crazed man, whose only use in life is, to cast obloquy upon those that have made him the thing he is."

"Forgive me, Curtis. I am heartily sorry for my rude speech," cried MacNaghten.

"Forgive you, sir!" said he, already following out another and a very different train of thought. "I have nothing to forgive. You were only doing what all the world does; what your Government and its authorities give the example of—insulting one whom it is safe to outrage! You treat me as you treat Ireland, that's all! Give me your hand, MacNaghten; I think, indeed I always said, you were the best of those fellows about Carew. If he hadn't been away from you, probably he'd not have fallen into that stupid mistake—that French connection."

"His marriage, do you mean?" cried Dan, eagerly.

"Marriage, if you like to call it so!" rejoined the other.

"Have you a single doubt that it was such?"

"Have I a single reason to believe it?" said Curtis, doggedly. "If a man of fifteen thousand a-year takes a wife, he selects a woman whose rank and station are at least equal to his own, and he takes care besides that the world knows it. If she brings him no fortune, he makes the more fuss about her family and parades her high relations. He doesn't wed in secret, and keep the day, the place, the witnesses, a mystery; he doesn't avoid even a chance mention of the event to his dearest friends; he doesn't settle down to live in an obscure retreat, when he owns a princely residence in the midst of his friends. When he does come back amongst them, he does not shrink from presenting her to the world; to be driven at last by necessity to the bold course—to fill his house with company, and see them drop off—fritter away one by one, distrustful, dissatisfied, and suspecting. Don't tell me, sir, that if he had a good cause and a safe cause behind him, that Walter Carew wouldn't have asked explanations, ay, and enforced them, too, from some of those guests who rewarded his hospitality so scurvily. You knew him well; and I ask you, was he the man to suffer the insolent attacks of the public journals, if it were not that he dreaded

even worse exposures by provocation? You are a shrewd and a clever fellow, MacNaghten; and if you don't see this matter as all the world sees it——"

"And is this the common belief? Do you tell me that such is the impression abroad in society?"

"Consult Matt Fosbroke. Ask Harvey Hempton what his wife says. Go to George Tisdall and get his account of their departure from Castle Carew, and the answer they sent when invited there a second time."

"Why, all this is new to me!" cried MacNaghten, in amazement.

"To be sure, it's only circumstantial evidence," broke in Curtis, with a bitter laugh; "but that is precisely what the courts of law tell you is the most unimpeachable of all testimony. It may fail to convince you, but it would be quite sufficient to hang me!"

The bare recurrence, for a second, to this theme at once brought back the old man to his own case, into which he launched with all the fervour of a full mind; now, sneering at the capacity of those before whom he was arraigned—now detailing with delight the insolent remarks he had taken occasion to make on the administration of justice generally. It was in vain that MacNaghten tried to lead him away from the subject. It constituted his world to him, and he would not quit it. A chance mention of Fagan's name in the proceedings of the trial gave occasion at last for interruption, and MacNaghten said—

"By the way, Fagan is a difficult fellow to deal with. You know him well, I believe?"

"Know him. Ay, that I do, sir. I have known that den of his since it was an apple-stall. My first post-obit was cashed by his worthy father. My last bill"—here he laughed heartily—"my last bill was protested by the son! And yet the fellow is afraid of me. Ay, there is no man that walks this city he dreads so much as me!"

Curtis was so much in the habit of exaggerating his own importance, and particularly as it affected others, that MacNaghten paid but little attention to this remark, when the other quickly rejoined—

"If you want to manage Fagan, take me with you. He'll not give you money on my bond, nor will he discount a bill for my name sake, but he'll do what costs him to the full as much—he'll tell you the truth, sir. Mark that—he'll tell you the truth."

"Will you accompany me to his house to-morrow?" asked Dan, eagerly.

"Ay, whenever you will."

"I'll call upon you at ten o'clock, then, if not too early, and talk over the business for which I want your assistance. Where are you stopping?"

"My town residence is let to Lord Belview, and to avoid the noise and turmoil of a hotel, I live in lodgings," said Curtis, slowly, and with a certain pomposity of air and manner; suddenly changing which to his ordinary jocular tone, he said—"You have, maybe, heard of a place called Fum's Alley. It lies in the Liberty, and opens upon that classic precinct called 'The Poddle.' There, sir, at a door over which a straw chair is suspended—it's the manufacture of the house—there, sir, lives Joe Curtis."

"I'll be with you at ten," said Dan; and with some passing allusion to the lateness of the hour, he led the way back into the town, where they parted.



CHAPTER XIX.

"FUM'S ALLEY, NEAR THE PODDLE."

MACNAGHTEN'S object in seeking an interview with Fagan was to ascertain, in the first place, who that claimant to the estate was, whose views he advocated; and secondly, what prospect there might be of effecting some species of compromise, which should secure to my mother a reasonable competence. Although, in his isolation, he had grasped eagerly even at such co-operation as that of Curtis, the more he thought over the matter, the less reason did he see to rejoice in the alliance. Even before misfortune had affected his intellect, his temper was violent, and his nature impracticable. Always yielding to impulse far more than to mature judgment, he rushed madly on, scrambling from difficulty to difficulty, and barely extricated from one mishap till involved in another.

Such aid as he could proffer, therefore, promised little; and Dan felt more than half disposed to relinquish it. This, however, should be done with all respect to the feelings of Curtis, and, reflecting in what way the object could best be compassed, MacNaghten slowly sauntered onwards to the appointed place. It was not without some difficulty that he at last discovered the miserable lane, at the entrance to which a jaunting-car was now waiting—a mark of aristocratic intercourse which seemed, by the degree of notice it attracted, to show that such equipages rarely visited this secluded region. MacNaghten's appearance, however, soon divided public curiosity with the vehicle, and he was followed by a ragged gathering of every age and sex, who very unceremoniously canvassed the object of his coming, and with a most laudable candour criticized his look and appearance. Although poor and wretched in the extreme, none of them asked alms, nor seemed in the slightest degree desirous of attracting attention to their own destitution.

"Is it a lodgin' yer honer wants?" whispered an old fellow on crutches, sidling close up to MacNaghten, and speaking in a confidential tone. "I've a back room looks out on the Poddle, for two shillings a week, furnished."

"I've the elegant place Mary Murdoch lived in for ten months, yer honer, in spite of all the polis', and might be livin' there yet, if she didn't take into her head to go to Fishamble Street play-house one night, and get arrested," cried a one-eyed old hag, with a drummer's coat on.

"He doesn't want a room—the gentleman isn't the likes of them that comes here," growled out a cripple, who, with the sagacity that often belongs to the maimed, seemed better to divine Dan's motives.

"You're right, my lad; I was trying to find out where a friend of mine lived—Mr. Curtis."

"Faix, ould Joe has company this mornin'," said the first speaker. "It was to see him that the fat man came on the jaunting-car."

"Are yiz goin' to try him agen?" said a red-eyed, fierce-looking woman, whose face was a mass of bruises.

"Sure the gentleman isn't a bailiff nor a polisman," broke in the cripple, rebukingly.

"There's not a man in the Poddle won't stand up for Joe Curtis, if he needs it," cried a powerfully-built man, whose energy of manner showed that he was the leader of a party.

"Yer honer's looking for Kitty Nelligan, but she's gone,"

whispered a young creature, with a baby at her breast, and her eyes overran with tears as she spoke. "She died o' Friday last," added she, in a still fainter voice.

"Didn't ye hear him say it was Mister Joe he wanted? and there's the house he lives in," said another.

"Yis, but he can't go up to him now," said the man who affected to assume rule amongst them; "the one that came on the car said he wasn't to be disturbed on any account."

"Begorra," chimed in the cripple, "if it's a levee, yer honer must wait yer turn!"

"I'm quite willing," said Dan, good-humouredly, "a man has no right to be impatient in the midst of such pleasant company;" and as he spoke, he seated himself on a low stone bench beside the house door, with all the ease of one bent on being companionable.

Had MacNaghten assumed airs of haughty superiority or insolent contempt for that motley assembly, he never could have attained to the position to which the last words, carelessly uttered as they were, at once raised him. They not only pronounced him a gentleman, but a man of the world besides—the two qualities in the very highest repute in that class by which he was surrounded. Instead, therefore, of the familiar tone they had previously used towards him, they now stood silently awaiting him to speak.

"Do the people hereabouts follow any particular trade?" asked Dan.

"'Tis straw chairs principally, your honer," replied the cripple, "is the manufacture of the place; but most of us are on the streets."

"On the streets--how do you mean?"

"There's Billy Glory, there yonder, he sings ballads; that man with the bit of crape round his hat hawks the papers; more of us cry things lost or stolen; and a few more lives by rows and rucktions at elections, and the like."

"Faix! and," sighed the strong man, "the trade isn't worth the following now. I remember when Barry O'Hara wouldn't walk the streets without a body-guard—five in front and five behind him—and well paid they were; and I remember Hamilton Brown payin' fifty of us to keep College-green against the Government, on a great Parliament night. Ay, and we did it too!"

"They wor good times for more than you," broke in the woman in the uniform coat; "I made seven and sixpence on Essex-bridge in one night by the 'Shan van voght.'"

"The grandest ballad that ever was written," chimed in an old man with one eye; "does ye honer know it?"

"I'm ashamed to say not perfectly," said Dan, with an air of humility.

"Molly Daly's the one can sing it well, then," cried he; a sentiment re-echoed with enthusiasm by all.

"I'm low and down-hearted of a mornin'," said Molly, bashfully; "but maybe after a naggin and a pint I'll be better."

"Let me have the honour to treat the company," said Dan, handing a crown piece to one near him.

"If your honour wants to hear Molly, right, make her sing Tom Molloy's ballad for the Volunteers," whispered the cripple; and he struck up in a hoarse voice—

"Was she not a fool,
When she took off our wool,
To leave us so much of the
Leather—the leather!

"It ne'er entered her pate
That a sheepskin will 'bate,'
Will drive a whole nation
Together—together."

"I'd rather she'd sing Mosy Cassan's new song on Barry Rutledge," growled out a bystander.

"A song on Rutledge?" cried Dan.

"Yes, sir. It was describin' how Watty Carew enticed him down stairs, to kill him. Faix, but there's murder now goin' on up stairs; do ye hear ould Joe, how he's cursin' and swearin'?"

The uproar was assuredly enough to attract attention; for Curtis was heard screaming something at the top of his voice, and as if in high altercation with his visitor. MacNaghten accordingly sprang from his seat, and hurried up the stairs at once, followed by the powerful-looking fellow I have already mentioned. As he came near Curtis's chamber, however, the sounds died away, and nothing could be heard but the low voices of persons conversing in ordinary tones together.

"Step in here, sir," said the fellow to Dan, unlocking a door at the back of the house; "step in here, and I'll tell you when Mister Joe is ready to see you."

MacNaghten accepted the offer, and now found himself in a mean-looking chamber, scantily furnished, and looking out upon some of those miserable lanes and alleys with which the place abounded. The man retired, locking the door after him, and leaving Dan to his own meditations in solitude.

He was not destined to follow these thoughts long undisturbed,

for again he could hear Curtis's voice, which, at first from a distant room, was now to be heard quite close, as he came into the very chamber adjoining that where Dan was.

"Come this way, come this way, I say," cried the old man, in a voice tremulous with passion. "If you want to seize, you shall see the chattels at once—no need to trouble yourself about an inventory! There is my bed; I got fresh straw into the sacking on Saturday. The blanket is a borrowed one; that horseman's cloak is my own. There's not much in that portmanteau," cried he, kicking it with his foot against the wall. "Two ragged shirts and a lambskin waistcoat, and the title deeds of estates, that not even your chicanery could get back for me. Take them all, take that old blunderbuss, and tell the Grinder that if I'd have put it to my head twenty years ago, it would have been mercy compared to the slow torture of his persecution!"

"My dear Mr. Curtis, my dear sir," interposed a bland, soft voice, that Dan at once recognized as belonging to Mr. Crowther, the attorney, "you must allow me once more to protest against this misunderstanding. There is nothing further from my thoughts at this moment than any measure of rigour or severity towards you."

"What do you mean, then, by that long catalogue of my debts? Why have you hunted me out, to show me bills I can never pay, and bonds I can never release?"

"Pray be calm, sir; bear with me patiently, and you will see that my business here this morning is the very reverse of what you suspect it to be. It is perfectly true that Mr. Fagan possesses large, very large, claims upon you."

"How incurred, sir?—answer me that. Who can stand forty, fifty, ay, sixty per cent.? Has he not succeeded to every acre of my estate? Have I anything, except that settle-bed, that isn't his?"

"You cannot expect me to go at length into these matters, sir," said Crowther mildly; "they are now bygones, and it is of the future I wish to speak."

"If the past be bad, the future promises to be worse," cried Curtis, bitterly. "It is but sorry mercy to ask me to look forward!"

"I think I can convince you to the contrary, sir, if you vouchsafe me a hearing. I hope to show you that there are in all probability many happy years before you—years of ease and affluence. Yes, sir, in spite of that gesture of incredulity, I repeat it, of ease and affluence."

"So, then, they think to buy me at last;" broke in the old man. "The scoundrels must have met with few honest men, or they had never dared to make such a proposal. What do the rascals think to bribe me with—eh? tell me that."

"You persist in misunderstanding me, sir. I do not come from the Government—I would not presume to wait on you in such a cause!"

"What's the peerage to me? I have no descendants to profit by my infamy. I cannot barter my honour for my children's greatness! I'm prouder with that old hat on my head than with the coronet, tell them that. Tell them that Joe Curtis was the only man in all Ireland they never could purchase; tell them that when I had an estate I swore to prosecute for a poacher their ducal Viceroy, if he shot a snipe over my lands, and that I'm the same man now I was then!"

Crowther sighed heavily, like one who has a wearisome task before him, but must go through with it.

"If I could but persuade you, sir, to believe that my business here has no connection with politics whatever—that the Castle has nothing to do with it——"

"Ay, I see," cried Curtis, "it's Lord Charlemont sent you. It's no use; I'll have nothing to say to any of them. He's too fond of Castle dinners and Castle company for me! I never knew any good come of the patriotism that found its way up Corkhill at six o'clock of an evening!"

"Once for all, Mr. Curtis, I say that what brought me here this morning was to show you that Mr. Fagan would be willing to surrender all claim against you for outstanding liabilities, and besides to settle on you a very handsome annuity, in consideration of some concessions on your part, with respect to a property against which he has very large claims."

"What's the annuity—how much?" cried Curtis, hastily.

"What sum would you yourself feel sufficient, sir. He empowered me to consult your own wishes and expectations on the subject."

"If I was to say a thousand a-year, for instance?" said Curtis, slowly.

"I'm certain he would not object, sir."

"Perhaps if I said two, he'd comply?"

"Two thousand pounds a-year is a large income for a single man," replied Crowther, sententiously.

"So it is, but I could spend it. I spent eight thousand a-year once in my life, and when my estate was short of three! and that's what comes of it;" and he gave the settle-bed a rude

kick as he spoke. "Would he give two? that's the question, Crowther; would he give two?"

"I do not feel myself competent to close with that offer, Mr. Curtis; but if you really think that such a sum is necessary——"

"I do—I know it; I couldn't do with a shilling less; in fact, I'd find myself restricted enough with that. Whenever I had to think about money it was hateful to me. Tell him two is the lowest, the very lowest, I'd accept of, and if he wishes to treat me handsomely he may exceed it. You're not to judge of my habits, sir, from what you see here," added he, fiercely; "this is not what I have been accustomed to. You don't know the number of people who look up to me for bread. My father's table was laid for thirty every day, and it had been well for us, if as many more were not fed at our cost elsewhere."

"I have often heard tell of Meaghvalley House and its hospitalities," said Crowther, blandly.

"'Come over and drink a pipe of port' was the invitation when I was a boy. A servant was sent round to the neighbourhood to say, that a hogshead of claret was to be broached on such a day, and to beg that the gentlemen around would come over and help to drink it—ay, to drink it out! Your piperly hounds, with their two bottle magnum, think themselves magnificent now-a-days; why, in my time, they'd have been laughed to scorn!"

"They were glorious times, indeed," cried Crowther, with mad enthusiasm.

"Glorious times to beggar a nation, to prostitute public honour and private virtue," broke in Curtis, passionately; "to make men heartless debauchees, first, that they might become shameless scoundrels after; to teach them a youth of excess and an old age of venality. These were your Glorious Times! But you, sir, may be forgiven for praising them; to you, and others like you, they have been, indeed, 'Glorious Times!' Out of them grew those law-suits and litigations that have enriched you, while they ruined us. Out of that blessed era of orgie and debauch came beggared families and houseless gentry; men whose fathers lay upon down couches, and whose selves sleep upon the like of that," and the rude settle rocked as his hand shook it. "Out upon your Glorious Times, say I; you might as well call the drunken scene of a dinner party a picture of domestic comfort and happiness! It was a long night of debauchery, and this, that we now see, is the sad morning afterwards! Do you know, besides, sir," continued he in a still

fiercer tone, "that in those same 'Glorious Times,' you, and others of your stamp, would have been baited like badgers if found within the precincts of a gentleman's house? ay, faith, and if my memory does not betray me, I can call to mind one or two such instances."

The violence of the old man's passion seemed to have exhausted him, and he sat down on the bed, breathing heavily, and panting.

"Where were we?" cried he at last. "What was it that we were arguing? Yes—ay—to be sure—these bills—these confounded bills. I can't pay them. I wouldn't if I could. That scoundrel Fagan has made enough of me without that. What was it you said of an annuity—there was some talk of an annuity, eh?"

Crowther bent down and spoke some words in a low, murmuring voice.

"Well, and for that what am I to do?" cried Curtis, suddenly. "My share of the compact is heavy enough, I'll be sworn. What is it?"

"I think I can show you that it is not much of a sacrifice, sir. I know you hate long explanations, and I'll make mine very brief. Mr. Fagan has very heavy charges against an estate which is not unlikely to be the subject of a disputed ownership. It may be a long suit, with all the delays and difficulties of Chancery; and in looking over the various persons who may prefer claims here and there, we find your name amongst the rest, for it is a long list, sir. There may be forty, or forty-five in all! The principal one, however, is a wealthy baronet who has ample means to prosecute his claim, and with fair hopes of succeeding. My notion, however, was, that if Mr. Fagan could arrange with the several persons in the cause to waive their demands for a certain consideration, that it would not be difficult then to arrange some compromise with the baronet himself—he surrendering the property to Fagan for a certain amount, on taking with it all its liabilities. You understand?"

"And who's the owner?" asked Curtis shortly.

"He is dead, sir."

"Who was he when alive?"

"An old friend, or rather the son of an old friend of yours, Mr. Curtis!"

"Ah, Brinsley Morgan! I guess him at once; but you are wrong, quite wrong there, my good fellow. I haven't the shadow of a lien on his estate. We talked it over together one

day, and Hackett, the Attorney-General, who was in the house, said, that my claim wasn't worth five shillings; but I'll tell you where I have a claim, at least Hackett said so, I have a very strong claim—no, no; I was forgetting again—my memory is quite gone. It is so hard when one grows old to bear the last ten or fifteen years in mind. I can remember my boyhood and my school days like yesterday. It is late events that confuse me! You'll scarce believe me when I tell you, I often find myself going to dine with some old friend, and only discover when I reach his door that he is dead and gone this many a day! There was something in my mind to tell you, and it has escaped me already. Oh! I have it. There are some curious old family papers in that musty-looking portmanteau. I should like to find out some clever fellow that would look them over without rushing me into a lawsuit, mind ye, for I have no heart for that now! My brother Harry's boy is dead. India finished him, poor fellow! That's the key of it—see if it will open the lock."

"If you like I'll take them back with me, sir, and examine them myself at home."

"Do so, Crowther; only understand me well, no bills of costs, my worthy friend; no searches after this, or true copies of that; I'll have none of them. As Dick Parsons said, I'd rather spend my estate at the 'Fives' than the 'Four' Courts."

Crowther gave one of his complacent laughs, and having induced Curtis to accept an invitation for the following day at dinner, he took the portmanteau under his arm and withdrew.

He had scarcely descended the stairs when Dan found the door unlocked, and proceeded to pay his visit to Curtis, his mind full of all that he had just overheard, and wondering at the many strange things he had been a listener to.

When MacNaghten entered, he found Curtis sitting at a table, with his head resting on his hand, and looking like one deeply engaged in thought. Dan saluted him twice, without obtaining a reply, and at last said—

"They said that you had a visitor this morning, and so I have been waiting for some time to see you."

The other nodded assentingly, but did not speak.

"You are, perhaps, too much tired now," said Dan, in a kind voice, "for much talking. Come and have a turn in the open air. It will refresh you."

Curtis arose, and took his hat, without uttering a word.

"You are a good walker, Curtis," said MacNaghten, as they reached the street. "What say you, if we stroll down to Harold's-cross, and eat our breakfast at the little inn they call 'The Friar?'"

"Agreed," muttered the other, and walked along at his side without another word; while Dan, to amuse his companion, and arouse him from the dreary stupor that oppressed him, exerted himself in various ways, recounting the popular anecdotes of the day, and endeavouring, so far as might be, to entertain him.

It was soon, however, evident that Curtis neither heard nor heeded the efforts the other was making, for he continued to move along with his head down, mumbling at intervals, to himself certain broken and incoherent words. At first, MacNaghten hoped that this moody dejection would pass away, and his mind recover its wonted sharpness; but now he saw that the impression under which he laboured was no passing or momentary burden, but a heavy load that weighed wearily on his spirits.

"I am afraid you are scarcely so well as usual to day?" asked Dan, after a long interval of silence between them.

"I have a pain hereabouts—it is not a pain either; but I feel uneasy," said Curtis, pushing his hat back from his forehead, and touching his temple with his finger.

"It will pass away with the fresh air and a hearty breakfast, I hope. If not, I will see some one on our return. Who is your doctor?"

"My doctor! You ask a man who has lived eighty-four years, who is his doctor! That nature that gave him a good stout frame; the spirit that told him what it could, and what it could not, bear—these, and a hearty contempt for physic, and all that live by it, have guided me so far, and you may call them my doctors if you wish."

Rather pleased to have recalled the old man to his habitual energy, Dan affected to contest his opinions by way of inducing him to support them; but he quickly saw his error, for Curtis, as though wearied by even this momentary effort seemed more downcast and depressed than before.

MacNaghten, therefore, contented himself with some commonplace remarks about the country around and the road they were walking, when Curtis came to a sudden halt, and said—

"You wouldn't take the offer, I'll be sworn. You'd say at once,—‘Show me what rights I'm surrendering—let me know

the terms of the agreement.' But what signifies all that at my age?—the last of the stock besides! If I lay by what will pay the undertaker, it's all the world has a right to demand at my hands."

"Here's 'The Friar'—this is our inn," said MacNaghten; "shall I be the caterer, eh? What say you to some fried fish and a glass of Madeira, to begin with?"

"I'll have a breakfast, sir, that suits my condition," said Curtis, haughtily. "Send the landlord here for my orders."

"Here's our man, then," said MacNaghten, humouring the whim, as he pushed the innkeeper towards him.

"What's your name, my good fellow," asked Curtis, with a supercilious look at the short but well-conditioned figure before him.

"Billy Mathews, sir," said the other, with difficulty restraining a smile at the dilapidated look of his interrogator.

"Well, Mathews, keep the Billy for your equals, my good friend. Mathews, I say, let us have the best your house affords, served in your best room, and in your best manner. If I ate prison fare for nine weeks, sir, it is no reason that I am not accustomed to something different. My name is Joseph Curtis, of Meaghvalley House. I sat in Parliament for eight-and-twenty years, for the borough of Kilternon; and I was tried for a murder at the last commission. There, sir! it's not every day you have a guest who can say as much."

As the landlord was moving away to give his orders, Curtis called out once more——

"Stay, sir; hear me out. There are spies of the Castle wherever I go. Who have you here just now? Who's in this house?"

"There's but one gentleman here at present, sir. I've known him these twenty years; and I'll vouch for it, he's neither a Government spy, nor an informer."

"And who will be satisfied with your guarantee, sir?" cried Curtis, insolently. "It's not a fellow in your position that can assure the scruples of a man in mine. Who is he? what's his name?"

"He's a respectable man, sir, well known in Dublin, and the son of one that held a good position once."

"His name—his name?" cried Curtis, imperiously.

"It's no matter about his name," replied the host, sulkily. "He has come to eat his breakfast here, as he does once or twice a week, and that's all that I have to say to him."

"But I'll have his name—I'll insist upon it," shouted out

Curtis, in a voice of high excitement; "persecuted and hunted down as I am, I'll defend myself. Your Castle bloodhounds shall see that Joe Curtis will not run from them. This gentleman here is the son of MacNaghten of Greenan. What signifies it to you if he be ruined! What affair is it of yours, I ask, if he hasn't a sixpence in the world?—I'll pay for what he takes here. I'm responsible for everything. I have two thousand a year secured on my life"—he stopped and seemed to reflect for a moment, then added—"that is, I may have it if I please."

MacNaghten made a signal for the innkeeper to serve the breakfast, and not notice any of the extravagances of his strange companion. Mathews was about to obey, when Curtis, recurring to his former thought, cried out,—

"Well, sir, this fellow's name?"

"Tell him who it is," whispered Dan, secretly; and the host said—

"The gentleman is one Mr. Raper, sir, head clerk to Mr. Fagan of Mary's-abbey."

"Leave the room—close the door," said Curtis, with an air of caution. "I saw the signal you gave the innkeeper a moment ago, MacNaghten," said he, in the same low and guarded tone. "I read its meaning perfectly. You would imply—The old fellow is not right—a crack in the upper story—humour him a bit. Don't deny it, man; you acted for the best; you thought, as many think, that my misfortunes had affected my intellect and sapped my understanding; and so they had done this many a day," added he, fiercely, "but for one thing. I had one grand security against madness, Dan; one great barrier, my boy—shall I tell it you? It was this, then—that if my head wandered sometimes, my heart never did—never! I hated the English and their party in this country with a hate that never slept, never relaxed! I knew well that I was the only man in Ireland that they could not put down. Some they bought—some they ruined—some they intimidated—some they destroyed by calumny. They tried all these with me, and at last were driven to a false accusation, and had me up for a murder! and that failed them, too! Here I stand their opponent, just as I did fifty-two years ago, and the only man in all Ireland that dares to brave and defy them. They'd make me a peer to-morrow, Dan; they'd give me a colonial government; they'd take me into the Cabinet; there is not a demand of mine they'd say 'No' to, if I'd join them; but my answer is 'Never! never!' Go down to your grave, Joe Curtis, ruined,

ragged, half-famished, mayhap. Let men call you a fool, and worse! but the time will come, and the people will say—There was once a man in Ireland that never truckled to the Castle, nor fawned on the Viceroy; and that when he stood in the dock, with his life on the venture, told them that he despised their vengeance, though he knew that they were covering it with all the solemnity of a law-court; and that man his contemporaries—ay, even his friends—were pleased to call Mad!”

“Come, come, Curtis, you know well this is not my impression of you; you only say so jestingly.”

“It’s a sorry theme to crack jokes upon,” said the other, sadly. He paused, and seemed to reflect deeply for some minutes, and then, in a voice of peculiar meaning, and with a look of intense cunning in his small grey eyes, said, “We heard the name he mentioned—Raper, Fagan’s man of business. Let’s have him in, MacNaghten; the fellow is a half simpleton in many things. Let’s talk to him.”

“Would you ask Mr. Raper to join our breakfast?” asked Dan of the innkeeper.

“He has just finished his own, sir—some bread and water-cresses, with a cup of milk, are all that he takes.”

“Poor fellow!” said Dan, “I see him yonder in the summer-house; he appears to be in hard study, for he has not raised his head since we entered the room. I’ll go and ask him how he is.”

MacNaghten had not only time to approach the little table where Raper was seated unobserved, but even to look over the object of his study, before his presence was recognized.

“German, Mr. Raper; reading German,” cried MacNaghten, “I know the characters at least.”

“Yes, sir, it is German; an odd volume of Richter that I picked up a few days ago. A difficult author at first, somewhat involved and intricate in construction: here, for instance, is a passage——”

“My dear friend, it is all a Greek chorus to me, or anything else you can fancy equally unintelligible.”

“It is the story of an humble man, a village cobbler, who becomes by an accident of fortune suddenly rich. Now the author, instead of describing the incidents of life and the vicissitudes that encounter him, leaves us only to guess, or rather to supply them for ourselves, by simply dwelling upon all the ‘Gedänk’s-kriege,’ or mental conflicts, that are the consequences of his altered position. The notion is ingenious, and if not overlayed with a certain dreamy mysticism, would be very interesting.”

"I," said Dan, "would far rather hear of his acts than his reflections. What he did would amuse me more to know than to learn why."

"But how easy to imagine the one!" exclaimed Raper. "Wealth has its habits all stereotyped: from Dives to our own days the catalogue has been ever the same, 'purple and fine linen.' And if some have added to the mere sensual pleasures the higher enjoyments derivable from objects of art and the cultivation of letters, has it not been because their own natures were more elevated, and required such refinements as daily necessities? The humble man suddenly enriched, lives no longer in the sphere of his former associates, but ascends into one of whose habits he knows nothing; and Jean Paul condemns him for this, and reminds him that when a river is swollen by autumn rains, it does not desert its ancient channel, but enlarges the sphere of its utility, by spreading fertilization on each side of it, seeming to think—I may, by the accidents of life, grow small and humble again; it is as well that I should not quit the tiny course I have followed in my humble fortunes."

"And do you agree with him?" asked Dan, more amazed by the enthusiasm of his companion, than by the theme that suggested it.

"I do so in everything; I speak, of course, as one who knows nothing of those ambitions by which wealthy men are encompassed; I am not in the position of one who has seen and felt these fascinations, and who emerges from his poverty to resume a former station. Take the case of Mr. Curtis, for instance."

"What! old Curtis—Joe Curtis?" asked Dan, eagerly.

"Yes, Curtis, formerly of Meaghvalley. Well, if his claim be as good as they suppose, he'll not only inherit the great Wicklow estates, but the Western property so long in Chancery."

MacNaghten saw that Raper was pouring forth this knowledge without being conscious that he was making an important revelation, and gave a dry commonplace assent.

"Who can say what may not be his income?" exclaimed Raper, thoughtfully; "twenty thousand a-year, at the least."

"And his prospects are good, you say—his chances of success?"

"The marriage certificate of Noah Curtis and Eleanor Carew has been discovered, sir, and if the will of Fownes Carew be authentic, the case, I believe, is clear."

"What Carews were these?"

"The ancestors of Walter Carew, sir, whose estates now descend to the heirs of the female branch."

"And Curtis will inherit these?"

The tone in which Dan uttered these words so startled Raper, that he suddenly recovered his self-possession, and remembered how unguardedly he had related this mysterious piece of intelligence.

"When was this discovery made?—who chanced to trace this relationship between Curtis and the Carew family?" cried MacNaghten, in intense anxiety.

A signal from Raper suddenly suggested caution and reserve; but Dan, too much excited to attend it, went on—

"Sir, never believe it! It is some infernal scheme concocted between Fagan and the lawyers. They have put forward this wretched old man, half-witted as he is——"

A hand grasped Dan's arm as he said this—he turned, and there stood Curtis beside him!

"I've heard you both!" said the old man, drily. "To you, sir," said he to Raper, "I owe my thanks for a piece of welcome news; to you, MacNaghten, I feel grateful for all your candour!"

"Come, come, Curtis—be angry with me, if you will; but for heaven's sake, do not lend yourself to these base plots and schemes. If there be a conspiracy to rob poor Walter's widow and her child, let not one of his oldest, best friends have any share in it."

"I'll maintain my rights, sir—be assured of that!" said Curtis, with a degree of resolution strangely different from his former manner. "Mr. MacNaghten's impression of my competence to conduct my own affairs may possibly be disparaging, but, happily, there is another tribunal which shall decide on that question. Raper, I'm going into town—will you accompany me? Mr. MacNaghten, I wish you a good morning." And with these words, he took Raper's arm, and retired, leaving Dan still standing, mute, overwhelmed, and thunder-struck.



CHAPTER XX.

PROSPERITY AND ADVERSITY.

WHAT I have heretofore mentioned of the events which followed immediately on my father's death, were all related circumstantially to me by MacNaghten himself, who used to dwell upon them with a most painfully accurate memory. There was not an incident, however slight, there was not a scene of passing interest, that did not leave its deep impression on him; and, amid all the trials of his own precarious life, these were the events which he recurred to most frequently.

Poor fellow, how severely did he reproach himself for calamities that no effort of his could avert! How often has he deplored mistakes and errors which, though they perhaps hastened, by no means caused, the ruin that imperilled us. The simple fact was, that in his dread of litigation, from which almost all his own misfortunes had sprung, he endeavoured to conduct affairs which required the most acute and subtle intelligence to guide. He believed that good sense and good intentions would be amply sufficient to divest my father's circumstances of all embarrassment; and when, at last, he saw two claimants in the field for the property—immense, almost fabulous, demands from Fagan—and heard, besides, that no provision was made for my mother, whose marriage was utterly denied and disbelieved—then he appears to have lost all self-control altogether, and in his despair to have grasped at any expedient that presented itself. One day, addressing a confidential letter to Sir Carew O'Moore, whom he regarded as the rightful heir to the property; the next, adventuring to open relations with Curtis, through the mediation of Fagan. Every weak point in my mother's position became, of course, exposed by these fruitless communications; while, by his own change of purpose, he grew to be distrusted by each in turn.

It was a theme that he avoided speaking on; but, when questioned closely by me, he has owned that Curtis exercised a kind of sway, a species of terror-like influence over him, that totally overcame him.

"That old, besotted, crazy intellect," said he, "appeared to

have recovered freshness and energy with prosperity; and, animated with almost diabolical acuteness, to profit by every weakness of my own nature. Even Fagan, with all his practised craft, had to succumb to the shrewd and keen-witted powers of the old man; and Crowther owned that all his experience of life had not shown him his equal in point of intelligence."

A misanthropic bitter spirit gave him a vigour and energy that his years might have denied him; and there was a kind of vindictive power about him that withstood all the effects of fatigue and exhaustion.

The law had now begun its campaign in right earnest. There were two great issues to be tried at bar, and a grand question, involving any amount of intricacy, for the Chancery Court. The subject was the possession of a large estate, and every legal celebrity of the day was engaged by one side or the other. Of course such an event became the general topic of discussion in all circles, but more particularly in those wherein my father had once moved. Alas, for the popularity of personal qualities—how short-lived is it ever! Of the many who used to partake of his generous hospitality, and who benefited by his friendship, how few could now speak even charitably of his acts! Indeed, it would appear from the tone in which they spoke, that each, even the least observant or far-seeing, had long anticipated his ruin. Such absurd extravagance—such pretension! A house fit for a sovereign prince, and a retinue like that of royalty! And then the daily style of living—endless profusion and waste. The "French connection"—none would say marriage—also had its share of reprobation. The kindly-disposed only affected to deplore and grieve over the unhappy mistake. The rigidly-right seemed to read in his own downfall a justice for a crime committed; while another section, as large as either, "took out" their indignation at his insolence in having dared to present her to the world as his wife!

And yet his once warm heart was scarcely cold when they said these things of him. And so it is to this day, and to this hour: the same code of morality exists, and the same set of moralisers are to be met with everywhere. Far be it from me to say that faults and follies should pass unnoticed and unstigmatised; but, at least, let the truth-teller of to-day not have been the tuft-hunter of yesterday—let the grave monitor who rebukes extravagance, not once have been the Sybarite guest who provoked excess—but least of all let us hear predictions of ruin from the lips that only promised long years of happiness and enjoyment.

Events moved rapidly. The Chancellor appointed a receivership over the property, and an order from the Court required that immediate possession should be taken of the house and demesne. My father's balance at his banker's amounted to some thousand pounds. This, too, was sequestered by a judge's order, "awaiting proceedings." An inventory of everything—even to the personal effects of my mother—the jewellery she had brought with her from France—her very wardrobe—was taken. The law has a most microscopic eye for detail. Carriages, horses, servants' liveries, were numbered—the very cradle, in which lay her baby, was declared to belong to some unknown owner; and a kind of mystical proprietorship seemed to float unseen through the chambers and corridors of that devoted dwelling.

My poor mother!—removed from room to room, with good-natured care, to spare her the shock of proceedings which even her ignorance of the world might have taken alarm at—weak, scarcely able to walk—only half conscious of the movement around her—asking every moment for explanations which none had courage to give her—agitated with vague terror—a sense of some misfortune lowering over her, and each moment nearer—catching at a chance word dropped here—eagerly watching at every look there—what misery, what suffering was yours! poor, friendless, forsaken widow!

Where was MacNaghten, her one faithful friend and counsellor? He had gone to town early that morning, and had not yet returned. One last but fruitless effort to induce Curtis to come to terms, had led him again to seek an interview. Her cousin De Gabriac, who had been ill for several days, had by a mere accident, from expressions picked up by his valet in the household, learned the nature of the allegation against my mother—that her marriage was denied, and my illegitimacy declared. Almost driven to madness by what sounded like an outrage to his pride, he had set out for Dublin to fasten upon some one—any one—a personal quarrel in the vindication of my mother's honour. Fagan's address was known to him, by frequent mention of his name, and thither he accordingly hastened. The Grinder was from home, but to await his return De Gabriac was ushered up stairs into the drawing-room, where an elderly man was seated writing at a table. The old man lifted his head and slightly saluted the stranger, but continued his occupation without any further notice, and De Gabriac threw himself into a chair to wait with what patience he could, for Fagan's coming.

There was a newspaper on the table, and De Gabriac took it up to spell as he could the intelligence of the day. Almost the very first lines which caught his eye, were an announcement of an "Extensive sale of valuable furniture, plate, and household effects, late the property of Walter Carew, Esq." Certain enigmatical words that headed the advertisement puzzled the foreigner, and unable to restrain his eagerness to unravel their meaning, he advanced to the table where the old man was writing, and in a polite tone asked him to explain what meant such phrases as "In re Joseph Curtis, Esq., of Meaghvalley House, and others, petitioners."

The other, thus addressed, looked from the newspaper to the inquirer, and back again to the paper, and then to the astonished face of the Frenchman, without a word. "I have to hope," said De Gabriac, "that nothing in my question may appear rude or uncivil. I merely wished to know——"

"To know who Joseph Curtis is!" broke in the old man, quickly. "Then I'll tell you, sir. He is the only surviving son of Robert Harrison Curtis and Eleanor Anne, his wife, born at Meaghvalley House, in the parish of Cappagh, barony of Ivrone, Anno Domini 1704. Served in Parliament for twenty-eight years, and commanded the militia of his native county, till deprived of that honour by a rascally Government and a perjured Viceroy." Here his voice grew loud, and his manner violent and excited. "Since when, sir, harassed, persecuted, and tortured, he has been robbed of his estates, stripped of his property, and left houseless and friendless—ay, sir, friendless I say, for poverty and want attract no friendship; and who would still be the victim of knavery and scoundrelism if Providence had not blessed him with a clear head as well as a strong heart. Such he is, and such he stands before you. And now, sir, that I have answered your question, will you favour me with a reply to mine—what are you called?"

"I am the Count Emile De Gabriac," said the Frenchman, smiling; "I will spare you the pedigree and the birth-place."

"Wisely done, I've no doubt, sir," said Curtis, "if, as I surmise, you are the relative of that French lady whom I met at Castle Carew."

"You speak of my cousin, sir—Madame de Carew."

"I do not recognize her as such, sir, nor does the law of this country."

"How do you mean, sir—not married—is it such you would imply?" cried De Gabriac, fiercely.

"Never imagine that your foreign airs can terrify me, young gentleman," said Curtis, insolently. "I've seen you in your own country, and know well the braggadocio style you can assume. If you ask me for information, do so with the manner that be- seems inquiry. If you are for a quarrel, it's not Joe Curtis will balk your good intentions."

"Poor old fool," said De Gabriac, contemptuously. "If you had a grandson or a nephew to answer for your insolence——"

"But I have neither—I want neither; I am ready, willing, and able to defend my own honour, and this is exactly what I suspect you are unable to say."

"But you do not suppose that I can cross a weapon with the like of you!" said De Gabriac, with an insolent laugh.

"You wouldn't be a Frenchman if you hadn't a subterfuge to escape a meeting!" cried Curtis, with a most taunting impertinence of manner.

"This is pushing insolence too far, old man," said De Gabriac, barely able to restrain himself.

"And yet not far enough, it would seem, to prompt you to an act of manhood. Now hear me, Monsieur Count. I am no admirer of your country, nor its ways; but this I will say, that a French gentleman, so far as I have seen of them, was always ready to resent an insult; and, whenever a slight was passed by unnoticed, the presumption ever was, that he who endured it was not a gentleman. Is it to some such explanation you wish to conduct me in the present case?"

A contemptuous exclamation and a glance of ineffable disdain was all the reply the Count vouchsafed to this outrageous appeal, and probably by no means could he so effectually have raised the old man's anger. Any illusion to his age, to the infirmities that pertained to it, he bore always with the greatest impatience; but to suppose that his time of life placed him beyond self-vindication was an insult too great to be endured, and he would have braved any peril to avenge it. His sudden access to wealth, far from allaying the irritabilities of his nature, had increased and exaggerated them all. The insolence of prosperity was now added to the querulous temperament that narrow fortune had engendered, and the excitement of his brain was little short of actual frenzy. To what extent of outrage passion might have carried him there is no saying, for he was already hurriedly advancing towards the Count when the door opened, and Polly Fagan entered. She had overheard from an adjoining room the words of high altercation, and recog-

nising Curtis as one of the speakers, determined at any cost to interfere.

"I am sure, sir," said she, addressing the old man, while she curtsied deeply to the stranger, "that you will forgive my intrusion; but I only this moment learned that you were here writing, and I thought that probably the quiet seclusion of my room would suit you better—may I make bold to offer it to you?"

"Thanks, madam; but, with your leave, this is quite to my taste," said he, stiffly.

"It is so comfortable, sir, and looks out upon our little garden!" said Polly, coaxingly.

"I am certain, madam, that it has every attraction, and only needs your presence there to be incomparable."

"Nay, sir," said she, laughing, "I'll not take your innuendo save in its flattering sense."

"I never flatter, madam, for I wouldn't try to pass on another the base coinage I'd reject myself. Others, however," and here he glanced towards the Frenchman, "may not have these scruples; and I am sure the charms of your apartment will be fully appreciated elsewhere."

Polly blushed deeply, not the less so that the Frenchman's eyes were bent upon her during the delivery of the speech with evident admiration.

"If mademoiselle would permit me, even as a sanctuary——" began the Count.

"Just so, Miss Polly," broke in Curtis; "let him take refuge there, as he tells you, for he feels very far from at his ease in my company."

Polly's quick intelligence read in these few words the real state of the case; and, resolved at all hazards to prevent untoward consequences, she made a sign to the Frenchman to follow her, and left the room.

It was in vain that the old man re-seated himself at the writing-table; all his efforts at composure were fruitless, and he muttered to himself threats of vengeance and imprecations, till he worked his mind up to a state of ungovernable fury. It was in the very paroxysm of this passion, and while he was pacing the chamber with hasty steps, that Fagan entered.

"Nothing unpleasant has occurred, sir, I trust," exclaimed the Grinder, as he beheld the agitated face, and watched the lips that never ceased to mutter unintelligibly.

"Tell me, sir," cried he, advancing up to Fagan, and placing one hand upon his shoulder, "tell me, sir, what is there in my

age and appearance that should exclude me from exacting the satisfaction in vogue amongst gentlemen? I ask you, sir, in plain language—and you have a right to answer me, for it was in your house and under your roof that I have received this outrage—where and what is my disqualification?”

“Pray explain yourself, Mr. Curtis. I trust I haven’t heard you aright, and that any one had dared to offend you within these walls!”

“Yes, sir, in the very room where we stand, not half an hour ago, an insolent scoundrel of a foreigner—a French lackey—a hair-dresser, perhaps—has had the insolence to talk to me, a gentleman of fortune and position, a man whose estate places him in the first rank of this country’s gentry. You said so yesterday. Don’t deny it, sir, I quote your own very words.”

“I am most ready and willing to repeat them, Mr. Curtis,” said Fagan, humbly; “pray go on.”

“You said yesterday,” continued Curtis, “in the presence of two others, that, except Lord Kiltimon’s, there was not so large a property in the country; did you, sir, or did you not?”

“I certainly did say so, sir.”

“And now, sir, you would go back of it—you had some reservation, some qualifying something or other, I’ll be bound; but I tell you, Mr. Anthony Fagan, that though these habits may suit an apple-stall in Mary’s Abbey, they are unbecoming when used in the presence of men of rank and fortune. I believe that is plain speaking, sir; I trust there may be no misconception of my meaning at least!”

Fagan was not, either by nature or by disposition, disposed to submit tamely to insult; but whether it was from some strong reason of policy, or that he held Curtis as one not fully responsible for his words, he certainly took no steps to resent his language, but rather seemed eager to assuage the violence of the old man’s temper.”

“It’s all very well, sir,” said Curtis, after listening with considerable show of impatience to these excuses; “it’s all very well to say you regret this and deplore that. But let me tell you there are other duties of your station beside apologies. You should take measures that when persons of my rank and station accept the shelter of your roof, they are not broken in upon by rascally foreigners, vile adventurers, and swindlers! You may be as angry as you please, sir, but I will repeat every word I have said. Yes, Mr. Fagan; I talk from book, sir—I speak with knowledge; for when you were serving out crab-

apples, in a check-apron, at your father's stall, I was travelling on the Continent, as a young gentleman of fortune!"

"Until you tell me how you have been insulted, and by whom," said Fagan, with some warmth, "I must hope that there is some easily explained mistake."

"Egad! this is better and better," exclaimed Curtis. "No, sir, you mistake me much—you entirely misunderstand me. I should most implicitly accept your judgment as to a bruised peach or a blighted pear; but upon a question of injured honour or of outraged feeling, I should scarcely defer to you so humbly!" and as he said these words, with an air of most exaggerated self-importance, he put on his hat, and left the room, without once noticing the respectful salutation of the Grinder.

When Fagan entered his daughter's room, he was surprised at the presence of the stranger, whom she presented to him as the Count de Gabriac, and who had so far profited by the opportunity as to have already made a most favourable impression upon the fair Polly.

Polly rapidly told her father that the stranger, while awaiting his return, had been accidentally exposed to the most outrageous treatment from Curtis, to shelter him from a continuance of which she had offered him the hospitality of her own apartment.

"He came in," resumed she, "to learn some tidings of his cousin's affairs, for it appears that law proceedings of the most rigorous kind are in operation, and the poor widow will be obliged to leave Castle Carew."

Polly spoke with true feelings of regret, for she really now learned for the first time that my mother's position was involved in any difficulty, though from what precise cause she was still in ignorance.

"Leave me to speak with the Count alone, Polly; I can probably afford him the information he seeks."

The interview was not of long duration; but Fagan acquitted himself with a degree of tact and delicacy that scarcely seemed native to him. It is difficult to guess at his real motives in the matter. Perhaps he entertained some secret doubts that my mother's marriage might one day or other admit of proof; perhaps he felt some touch of gratitude for the treatment his daughter had experienced when a guest at Castle Carew. Indeed, he spoke of this to the Count with pride and satisfaction. Whatever the reasons, he used the greatest and most delicate reserve in alluding to my mother's situation, and told De

Gabriac that the proceedings, however rigorous they might appear, were common in such cases, and that when my mother had sufficiently recovered herself to give detailed information as to the circumstances of her marriage, there would be ample time and opportunity to profit by the knowledge. He went even further, and suggested that for the present he wished to place his little cottage at the Killeries at her disposal, until such time as she could fix upon a residence more to her taste. In fact, both his explanations and his offers were made so gracefully and so kindly, that De Gabriac assented at once, and promised to come to dinner on the following day, to complete all the arrangements.

When MacNaghten came to hear of the plan he was overjoyed, not only because it offered a home to my mother in her houseless destitution, but as evidencing a kind spirit on Fagan's part, from which he augured most favourably. In fact, the arrangement, while relieving them from all present embarrassment, suggested also future hope; and it was now determined, that while De Gabriac was to accompany my mother to the far west, Dan himself was to set out for France, with a variety of letters, which might aid him in tracing out the story of my father's marriage.

It was at an humble little hotel in Stafford-street, a quaint old house called "The Hart," that they passed the last evening together before separating. Polly Fagan came over to drink tea with my mother, and they chatted away in sombre mood till past midnight. MacNaghten was to sail with an early tide, and they agreed to sit up till it should be his time to depart. Often and often have I heard Dan speak of that evening. Every incident of it made an impression upon his memory quite disproportioned to their non-importance, and he has taken pains even to show me where each of them sat. The corner where my mother's chair stood is now before me, and I fancy I can bring up her pale young widow's face, tear-furrowed and sad, trying to look interested where, with all her efforts, her wandering thoughts were ever turning to the past, and where by no exertion could she keep pace with those "who sorrowed not as she sorrowed."

"We did not dare to talk to her of the future," said poor MacNaghten; "her grief was too holy a thing to be disturbed by such thoughts; but amongst ourselves we spoke whisperingly of when we were all to meet again, and she seemed to listen to us with interest. It was strange enough," remarked he, "how sorrow had blended all our natures—differing and discordant, as

heaven knows they were—into some resemblance of a family. I felt towards Polly as though she had been my sister, and totally forgot that Gabriac belonged to another land and another people; so humanising is the touch of affliction!”

It struck three; and at four o'clock Dan was to sail. As he stood up, he caught sight of my mother, and saw that her eyes were full of tears. She made a signal to him to approach, and then said, in a fervent whisper,—

“Come and see him before you go;” and led the way to the adjoining room, where her baby lay asleep. “I know,” said she, in broken accents, “that you will be a friend to him always, but if aught were to befall you! —”

MacNaghten cast his eyes heavenward, but made no answer.

“Yes,” cried she, “I have that hope;” and so saying, she knelt down beside the little cot to pray.

“It was odd,” said he, when telling me this, “I had never heard words of prayer in the French language before; but they struck upon my heart with a power and significance I cannot explain. Was it some strange inward consciousness of the power of Him before whom I was standing, and who knows every tongue and every people, and to whom all hearts are open, let their accents be ever so unlike or so various? I was in the street,” added he, “without knowing how I came there, for my brain was turning with a thousand thoughts.

“‘Where to, sir?’ said the carman.

“‘The Pigeon-house,’ said I, seating myself on the vehicle.

“‘Aint you Mr. MacNaghten, sir?’ asked a large, well-dressed man, in a civil voice, as he touched his hat respectfully to me.

“‘That is my name,’ replied I.

“‘Mr. Daniel MacNaghten, of Garrah-lynn?’ asked he again.

“‘When I owned it,’ rejoined I, trying to smile at a sad recollection.

“‘Then I have a writ against you, sir,’ continued he, ‘and I’m sorry I must execute it too.’

“‘At whose suit, and for what sum?’ asked I, trying to be calm and collected. He answered my last question first, by saying it was for an acceptance for twelve hundred and seventy-six pounds odd; and, after a little pressing, added,—

“‘At the suit of Joseph Curtis, Esq., of Meaghvalley House.’

“‘What’s to be done?’ said I, ‘I cannot pay it.’

“‘Come over to Green Street for the present, anyhow,’ said he civilly; ‘there are plenty of houses.’

“‘No, no; to jail, if I must,’ said I, boldly. ‘It’s not myself I was thinking about.’”

“Just as day was breaking I passed into the prison; and when I thought to be looking upon the mountains of the bay slowly fading behind me, I was ushered into the debtors’ yard, to wait till my future dwelling-place should be assigned me.”

I copy this incident in the very words he himself related it.



CHAPTER XXL

AT REST.

HAVING already acquainted my reader with the source from which I have derived all these materials of my family history, he will not be surprised to learn that MacNaghten’s imprisonment leaves a blank in this part of my narrative. All that I know indeed of these early years can be told in a few lines. My mother repaired with me to the cottage in the Killeries, to which also came De Gabriac shortly after, followed by Polly Fagan, whose affection for my mother now exhibited itself most remarkably. Not vainly endeavouring to dam up the current of a grief that would flow on, she tried to interest my mother in ways and by pursuits which were totally new to her, and, consequently, not coupled with painful recollections. She taught her to visit the poor in their cabins—to see them in the hard struggle of their poverty, stoutly confronting fortune day by day, carrying the weary load of adversity, without one hope as to the time when they might cease to labour and be at rest. These rambles through wild and unvisited tracts rewarded them well in the grand and glorious objects of scenery with which they became acquainted. It was everlasting discovery—now of some land-locked little bay, half-hid among its cliffs; now some lone island, with its one family for inhabitants; or now some picturesque bit of inland scenery, with wood and mountain, and waving grass. Occasionally, too, they ventured out to sea,

either to creep along the coast, and peep into the rockery caverns with which it is perforated; or, they would set sail for the distant islands of Arran—bleak and desolate spots on the wide, wild ocean. The charms of landscape, in its grandest features, were, however, the least of the benefits these excursions conferred, at least on my poor mother. She learned, then, to see and to feel that the sorrows of life fall uniformly—that few, indeed, are singled out for especial suffering, and that the load is apportioned to the strength that is to bear it. She saw, besides, how the hard necessities of existence formed in themselves a barrier against the wearing influence of grief; the hands that must labour for daily bread are not wrung in the wild transports of misery! It is the law of human nature, and the claims of the living are the counterpoise to the memory of the dead.

Neither her early education nor her habits disposed her to any exertion. All her ideas of life were circumscribed within the limits of certain pleasures and enjoyments. From her infancy she had never known any other care than how to make time pass swiftly and agreeably; now she had to learn the more rewarding lesson, that life can be profitably passed, and to this task she addressed herself, I believe, with a hearty earnestness.

It is only by estimating the change which took place in her character at this time, and which marked it during the short remainder of her life, that I am led to speculate upon the cause. Her days were passed in intercourse with the peasantry, whom, at last, she began to understand, through all the difficulties of their strange temperament, and all the eccentricities of their habits. There was not a cabin for miles round, with every one of whose inmates she was not acquainted, and of whose joys and sorrows, whose hopes and cares, she was not, in some shape, the participator.

When the sea was too rough, and the weather too wild for the fishermen to venture out, she was constantly amongst them with some material for home occupation; and it was curious to see those fingers, which had never been used to harder toil than the mock labour of the embroidery frame, ingeniously moving through the mazes of a fishing-net, while, in her foreign English, she would relate some story of her Breton countrymen, certain to interest those who sat admiringly around her.

How singular it is that the experience and the habits which are destined to guide us through the great trials of life are frequently acquired in scenes and amongst people the very opposite

to those wherein the lesson is to be profitable! And yet so it was. In exhorting and cheering others she elevated the tone of her own mind; in suggesting exertion to the faint-hearted she imbibed courage herself; and when teaching them to be of good cheer, she spoke the language of encouragement to herself. Her bodily health, too, kept pace with her mental. She who rarely had ventured out if the weather merely were threatening, could now face the stormiest seasons of that wild west. The darkest day of winter would see her abroad, braving, with an almost childish excitement, the beating rain and wind, or fighting onward to some lone cabin amongst the hills, through sleet and snow-drift, undeterred!

I have heard but little of the life they led within doors, but I believe that the evenings were passed pleasantly with books and conversation—De Gabriac reading aloud, while my mother and Polly worked; and thus the winter glided easily over, and spring was now approaching ere they were well aware that so many months had gone by. If my mother wondered at times why they never heard from MacNaghten, De Gabriac and Polly, who were in the secret for his mishap, would frame various excuses to account for his silence. Meanwhile they heard that such was the complication of the law proceedings which concerned the estate, so intricate the questions, and so puzzling, that years might pass in litigation ere any decision could be come to. A reserved offer came at this time from Sir Carew O'Moore, to settle some small annuity on my mother if she would relinquish all claim to the estate in his favour; but Fagan hesitated to acquaint her with a proposal which he well knew she would reject, and the very fact of which must be an insult to her feelings. This the Grinder commented on in a letter to his daughter, while he also avowed that as he saw no prospect of anything favourable to my mother likely to issue from the course of law, he must press upon her the necessity of her seeking an asylum in her own country, and amongst her own friends.

I have never been able to ascertain why my mother herself did not at once determine on returning to France after my father's death. Perhaps the altered circumstances of her fortune deterred her. There might have been reasons, perhaps, on the score of her birth. My impression is, that De Gabriac had quitted the Continent overwhelmed with debt, and dared not return there, and that, as his counsels greatly swayed her, she was influenced by whatever arguments he adduced.

So little was my mother acquainted with the details of her

altered condition in life, that she still believed a small but secure income remained to her; and it was only by a few lines addressed to her, and inclosed in a letter to Polly, that she was at length brought to see that she was actually without means of support for a single day, and that hitherto she had been a dependent on Fagan's kindness for a home.

I believe that this communication was not made with any harshness or want of feeling; on the contrary, that it was conveyed with whatever delicacy the writer could summon to so ungracious a task. It is more than probable, besides, that Fagan would not have made it at all, or at least not for a considerable time, had he not at that moment been involved in an angry correspondence with Polly, who had flatly refused to quit my mother, and return home. Irritated at this, and driven to extremities, he had determined in this last course to accomplish his object.

My mother was so much overwhelmed by the tidings, that she thought she could not have understood them aright, and hastened to Polly's room, with the letter in her hand.

"Tell me," cried she, "what this means—is it possible—can it be true—that I am actually a beggar?"

Polly read the lines with a flashing eye and heightened colour, but never uttered a word.

"Speak, Polly, dearest, and relieve me of this terrible fear, if you can," cried my mother, passionately.

"I understand what this means," said Polly, crushing the note in her hand; "this is a question that requires explanation. You must leave it to me. I'll go up to town this evening, and before the end of the week I'll be back with you. My father is mistaken—that's all; and you have misunderstood him!"

And thus planning, and excusing, and contradicting herself, she at last succeeded in allaying my mother's fears, and assuring her that it was a mere misapprehension, and that a few days would suffice to rectify it.

My mother insisted that Polly should not travel alone, and that Gabriac should be her companion—an arrangement to which she acceded with comparative ease and willingness. Had Polly Fagan and Gabriac merely met as people meet in society, with no other opportunities of knowing each other than are presented by the ordinary intercourse with the world, the great likelihood is, that they should have conceived for each other a rooted dislike. There was scarcely one single subject on which they thought in common. They differed in ideas of country

and people. Their tastes, their prejudices, their ambitions, all took opposite directions ; and yet such is the effect of intimacy, such the consequence of daily, hourly communion, that each not only learned to tolerate, but even to imbibe some of the notions of the other ; and an imperceptible compromise was at length entered into, by which individuality became tempered down, and even the broad traits of nationality almost effaced. The Count came to perceive, that what he had at first regarded as coarse and inelegant, was in reality the evidence of only a bold and vigorous spirit, exulting in its own energy, and confident of its power ; and Polly began to recognize that remarkable truth, that a coxcomb need not necessarily be a coward, and that the most excessive puppyism can consort with even a chivalrous courage and daring. Of these qualities—the very first in Polly's estimation—he had given several proofs in their adventures by sea and land, and under circumstances, too, where the very novelty of the peril to be surmounted might have suggested some fear.

There is a generous impulse usually to exalt in our esteem those whom we had once held cheaply, when on nearer intimacy we discover that we had wronged them. We feel as if there was a debt of reparation due to them, and that we are unjust till we have acquitted it. It may chance that now and then this honourable sentiment may carry us beyond reasonable bounds, and that we are disposed to accord even more than is due to them.

I have no means of knowing if such were the case here : I can but surmise from other circumstances the causes which were in operation. It is enough, however, if I state, that long before Gabriac had passed the limit of admiration for Polly, she had conceived for him a strong sentiment of love ; and while he was merely exerting those qualities which are amongst the common gifts of his class and his country, she was becoming impressed with the notion of his vast superiority to all of those she had ever met in society. It must be taken into account, that his manner towards her evinced a degree of respect and devotion which, though not overpassing the usual observance of good manners in France, contrasted very favourably with the kind of notice bestowed by country gentlemen upon "the Grinder's daughter." Those terrible traditions of exorbitant interest, those fatal compacts with usury, that had made Fagan's name so dreadfully notorious in Ireland, were all unknown to Gabriac. He only saw in Polly a very handsome girl, of a far more than common amount of intelligence, and with a spirit daringly

ambitious. As the favoured friend and companion of his cousin, he took it for granted that the peculiar customs of Ireland admitted such intimacies between those socially unequal, and that there was nothing strange or unusual in seeing her where she was. He, therefore, paid her every attention he would have bestowed on the most high-born damsel of his own court. He exhibited that deference which his own language denominated homage; and in fact, long before he had touched her affections, he had flattered her pride and self-love by a courtesy to which she had never, in all her intercourse with the world, been habituated.

Perhaps my reader needs not one-half of the explanation, to surmise why two young people—both good-looking, both attractive, and both idle—should, in the solitude of a country cottage, fall in love with each other. That they did so, at all events—she first, and he afterwards—is, however, the fact; and now, by the simple-hearted arrangement of my poor mother—whose thoughts had never taken in such a casualty—were they to set off together as fellow-travellers for Dublin. So far, indeed, from even suspecting such a possibility, it was only a few days previously that she had been deploring to Polly her cousin's fickleness in breaking off his proposed marriage in France, on the mere ground that his absence must necessarily have weakened the ties that bound him to his betrothed. What secret hopes the revelation may have suggested to Polly's mind is matter that I cannot even speculate on.

It was with a heavy heart my poor mother saw them drive from the door, and came back to sit down in solitude beside the cradle of her baby. It was a dark and rainy day of winter; the beating of the waves against the rocky shore, and the wailing winds, made sad chorus together; and without, as well as within, all was cheerless and depressing. Dark and gloomy as was the landscape, it was to the full as bright as the scene within her own heart; for now that she began to arrange facts and circumstances together, and to draw inferences from them, she saw that nothing but ruin lay before her. The very expressions of Fagan's letter, so opposite to the almost submissive courtesy of former times, showed her that he no longer hesitated to declare her the dependent on his bounty. "And yet," cried she, aloud, "are these the boasted laws of England? Is the widow left to starve?—is the orphan left houseless, except some formality or other be gone through? To whom descends the heritage of the father, while the son is still living?" From these thoughts, which no ingenuity of hers could pierce, she

turned to others not less depressing. What had become of all those who once called themselves her husband's friends? She, it is true, had herself lived estranged and retired from the world, but Walter was everywhere—all knew him, all professed to love him. Bitter as ingratitude will ever seem, all its poignancy is nothing compared to the smart it inflicts when practised towards those who have gone from us for ever; we feel then as though treachery had been added to the wrong. "Oh!" cried she, in her anguish, "how have they repaid him whose heart and hand were ever open to them!" A flood of recollections, long dammed up by the habits of her daily life, and the little cares by which she was environed, now swept through her mind, and from her infancy and her childhood, in all its luxurious splendour, to her present destitution, each passage of her existence seemed revealed before her. The solitude of the lonely cottage suggesting such utter desolation, and the wild and storm-lashed scene without adding its influence to her depression, she sat for some time still and unmoved, like one entranced; and then springing to her feet, she rushed out into the beating rain, glad to exchange the conflict of the storm for that more terrible war that waged within her.

Like one flying from some terrific enemy, she ran with all her speed towards the shore. The sea was now breaking over the rocks with tremendous force, and sending vast clouds of spray high into the air, while whole sheets of foam were wildly tossed about by the wind. Through these she struggled on; now stumbling or falling, as her tender feet yielded to the sharp rocks, till she reached a little promontory over the sea, on which the waves struck with all their force; and there, with streaming hair and dripping garments, she sat braving the hurricane, and in a wild paroxysm of imagined heroism, daring fortune to her worst.

Physical ills are as nothing to those that make the heart their dwelling-place, and to her there seemed an unspeakable relief in the thundering crash of the storm, as compared with the desolate silence of her lonely house.

The whole of that day saw her on the selfsame spot; and there was she discovered at nightfall by some fishermen, propped up in a crevice of the rock, but cold and scarcely conscious. They all knew her well, and with the tenderest care they carried her to her cottage. Even before they reached it her mind began to wander, and wild and incoherent words dropped from her. That same night she was seized with fever; the benevolent but simple people about her knew not what to do; the nearest

medical aid was many miles off; and when it did arrive, on the following morning, the malady had already attacked the brain.

The same sad short series of events so many have witnessed, so many have stood by, with breaking hearts, now occurred. To wild delirium, with all its terrible excesses, succeeded the almost more dreadful stupor; and to that again the brief lucid moment of fast-ebbing life; and then came the sleep that knows no waking—and my mother was at rest!



CHAPTER XXII.

THE VILLAGE OF REICHENAU.

I MUST now ask of my reader to clear at a bound both time and space, and stand beside me some years later, and in a foreign land.

The scene is at the foot of the Splugen Alps, in a little village begirt with mountains, every crag and eminence of which is surmounted by a ruined castle. There is a grandeur and solemnity in the whole landscape, not alone from its vast proportions, but from the character of impregnability suggested by those fastnesses and the grey sad-coloured tint of hill and verdure around.

There is barely space for the village in the narrow glen, which is traversed by two streams—the one, yellow, turbid, and sluggish; the other, sparkling, bright, and impetuous. These are the Rhines, which uniting below the village of Reichenau, form that noble river whose vine-clad cliffs and castled crags are lyrical in every land of Europe.

I scarcely know a spot throughout the whole Continent more typical of isolation and retirement than this. There is no entrance to it from the north, save by a wooden bridge over the torrent; towards the south it is only accessible by the winding zig-zag of the “Via Mala;” east and westward rise gigantic mountains untraversed by even the chamois hunter, and yet

there is no appearance of that poverty and destitution so usually observable in remote and unvisited tracts. Many of the houses are large and substantially built, some evince a little architectural pretension in the way of ornament, and one which occupies a little terrace above the river has somewhat the air of a chateau, and in its windowed roof and moated gardens shows that it aspired to the proud distinction of a seignorial residence.

It might be difficult to ascertain how an edifice of this size and pretension came to be built in such a place; at the time I speak of it was a school, and a modest-looking little board affixed to a pear-tree at the gate announced "The Academy of M. Jost." In my boyish eyes, this chateau, its esplanade above the stream, the views it embraced, and the wild, luxuriant orchard by which it was begirt, comprised an amount of magnificence and beauty, such as no stretch of imagination could surpass. In respect to its picturesque site, my error was probably not great; the mountain scene, in all its varied tints of season and sunlight, is still before me, nor can I remember one whose impression is more pleasing.

The chateau, for so it was called, lost nothing in my estimation by any familiarity with its details. I only knew of the large school-room with its three windows that opened on the terrace, the smaller chamber where the classical teacher held his more select audience, and a little den, fitted up with cases of minerals, insects, and stuffed birds, which was denominated M. Jost's cabinet, and where that worthy man sat, weeks, months, I believe years long, microscope in eye, examining the intricate anatomy of beetles, or poring over some singular provisions in the eyelids of moths. Save when "brought up" for punishment, we rarely saw him. Entirely engrossed with his own pursuits, he seldom bestowed a thought upon us; and when, by any untoward incident such as I have alluded to, we were thrust into his notice, the presence of a strange-looking butterfly—a brilliant dragon-moth—a spider even, would be certain to divert his thoughts into a new channel, and ourselves and our derelictions be utterly forgotten. Need I say, that no culprit ever appeared in the dock without some such recommendation to mercy, nor was there one of us ever unprepared with some specimen of the insect tribe, ready to be produced at any moment of emergency?

It is but fair to say, that the other masters—there were but two—were singularly forbearing and indulgent. M. Gervois, who "taught" the little boys, was a quaint-looking, venerable old gentleman, with a queue, and who wore on fête-days a ribbon

in his button hole. He was, it was said, originally a French noble of large fortune, but who had lost everything by the extravagance of an only son, and had sought out, in voluntary exile, this remote spot to end his days in. His manners were always marked with a tinge of proud reserve which none ever infringed upon, nor, out of school-hours, did any one ever presume to obtrude upon his retirement.

The classical teacher was a foreigner, we knew not of what nation; we called him sometimes a Pole, now a Spaniard, now an Irishman—for all these nationalities only to us expressed distant and unknown lands. He was small, almost to dwarfishness, and uniformly dressed in a suit of peculiarly coloured brown cloth; his age might have been fifty, sixty, or even more, for there was little means of deciphering the work of time in a face sad and careworn, but yet unwrinkled, and where sorrow had set its seal in early life, but without having worn the impress any deeper by time. Large spectacles of blue glass concealed his eyes, of which the story ran, one was sightless; and his manner was uniformly quiet and patient—extending to every one the utmost limit of forbearance, and accepting the slightest efforts to learn as evidences of a noble ambition. To myself he was more than generous—he was truly and deeply affectionate. I was too young to be one of his class, but he came for me each morning to fetch me to the school, for I did not live at the chateau, but at a small two-storied house abutting against the base of the mountain. There we lived; and, now, let me explain who we were.

But a peep within our humble sitting-room will save both of us much time. I have called it humble—I might have used a stronger word, for it was poor almost to destitution. The wooden chairs and tables; the tiled floor; the hearth, on which some soaked branches of larch are smoking; the curtainless window, as well as the utter absence of even the very cheapest appliances of comfort,—all show indigence. While a glance at the worn form and hollow cheek of her who now bends over the embroidery-frame attests that actual want of sustenance is there written. Haggard and thin as the features are, it needs no effort to believe that they once constituted beauty of a high order. The eye, now sunken and almost colourless, was once flashing in its brilliancy; and that lip, indrawn and bloodless, was full and rounded like that of a Grecian statue. Even yet, amidst all the disfigurement of a coarse dress, the form is graceful, and every motion and gesture indicate a culture that must have been imbibed in a very different sphere.

How I have her before me at this instant, as, hearing my childish footstep at the door, she pulls the string to admit me, and then, turning from her frame, kneels down to kiss me! Monsieur Joseph, for so is the Latin master called, stands just within the doorway, as if waiting to be invited to come further.

"And how has he been to-day—a good boy?" asks she.

M. Joseph smiles, and nods his head.

"I'm glad of it; Jasper will always behave well. He will know that to do right is a duty, and a duty fulfilled is a blessing. What says M. Gervois—is he content too?"

"Quite so," I reply. "He said I knew my hymn perfectly; and that if I learned the two pages that he showed me, off by heart, I should be made 'elite' of my class."

"And what will that be?"

"I shall be above them all, and they must salute me when we meet out of school, and in play hours."

"Let them do so in affection, but not for coercion, Jasper; he who is cleverer than his fellows ought to be humbler, if he would be as happy."

"Quite true, Polly; quite true: you never said anything more just. The conscious power of intellect tells its possessor of his weakness as well as of his strength. Jasper, my child, be humble."

"But when I said humble," broke in he again, "I meant in self-esteem, for there is a kind of pride that sustains and elevates us."

Mons. Joseph only sighed gently, but never spoke.

After a few words like these, I was usually dismissed to my play-room, a little corner eked out of an old tower which had been accidentally joined to the house after it was built, but which to me was a boon unspeakable, for it was all my own; but can I revel in the delight of that isolation which each afternoon saw me enjoy? I would briefly tell my reader, if so be that he need the information, that she who in that worn attire bends over her task, is Polly Fagan, and that Mons. Joseph is no other than our old acquaintance Joe Raper!

De Gabriac had married Polly secretly, Joe Raper alone being admitted to their confidence. For months long they had watched for some favourable opportunity of breaking the event to the old man; and at last, worn out by care and anxiety, Polly could refrain no longer, but made the avowal herself, and, in a few brief words, told her fault and her sorrow.

The Grinder heard her with the stern impassiveness that he ever could summon in any dread emergency. He had that

species of courage that can surmount every peril, only let its full extent be known; and although it was true that the announcement of the loss of all he was worth in the world would have been lighter tidings than those he now listened to, he heard her to the end without interruption. There was that in his calm, cold face, which smote her to the very heart—the very way he drew back his hand, as she tried to grasp it in her own, was a shock to her; and, ere she finished her sad story, her voice was broken, and her lips tremulous.

Terrible conflict was it between father and child! between two natures, each proud as the other—each bold, stern, and unforgiving!

“The date of this event?” asked he, as she concluded.

“The ninth of October.”

“Where?”

“At a chapel in Cullenswood-avenue.”

“Who witnessed it?”

“Raper.”

“Any other?”

“No other.”

“The ninth of October fell on a Tuesday; it was then, or the day after, that I gave you a diamond clasp, a present?”

“It was.”

“Who performed this ceremony?”

“A priest, but I am not at liberty to tell his name; at least, without the assurance of your forgiveness.”

“Then do not tell it! The man is still living?”

“I believe so.”

“And your husband—where is he?”

“In the city. He is waiting but to be received by you ere he return to France to arrange his affairs in that country.”

“He need not long delay his departure, then—tell him so.”

“You forgive us, then?” cried she, almost bursting with gratitude.

“No!—never!”

“Not forgive us!—not acknowledge us!”

“Never! never!” reiterated he, with a thick utterance, that sounded like the very concentration of passion. The words seemed to have a spell in them to conjure up a feeling in her who heard, as deeply powerful as in him who spoke them.

“Am I no longer your daughter, sir?” asked she, rising and drawing herself to her full height before him.

“You are a Countess, madam,” said he, with a scornful irony;

"I am but an humble man, of obscure station and low habits. I know nothing of nobility, nor of its ways."

"I ask again, do you disown me?" said she, with a voice as calm and collected as his own.

"For ever, and ever," said he, waving his hand, as though the gesture was to be one of adieu. "You are mine no longer—you had ceased to be so ere I knew it. Go to your home, if you have one; here, you are but an intruder—unasked, unwished for!"

"Bitter words to part with! but hear me, sir. He who has joined his lot to mine should not pay the penalty of my fault. Against him you can bear no malice—he at least does not merit the reproach you have cast on me. Will you see him—may he speak with you?"

"Whenever he pleases—provided it be but once. I will not be importuned."

"You will bear in mind, sir, that he is a man of birth and station, and that to his ears words of insult are a stranger."

"I will treat him with all the deference I owe to his rank, and to the part he has performed towards myself," said Fagan, slowly.

"It were, perhaps, better then that you should not meet?"

"It were, perhaps, better so!"

"Good-bye, sir. I have no more to say."

"Good-bye, madam. Tell Raper I want to speak to him as you pass out."

With Raper the interview was briefer still. Fagan drily informed his old follower that he no longer needed his services. And although Joe heard the words as a criminal might have listened to those of his last sentence, he never uttered a syllable. Fagan was brief, though bitter. He reproached him with the long years he had sheltered him beneath his roof, and reviled him for ingratitude! He spoke of him as one who had eaten the bread of idleness, and repaid an existence of ease by treachery. Once, and only once, did the insulting language he lavished on him seem to sting him beyond further endurance. It was when Fagan said,—

"You think me in your power, sir: you fancy that amid that mass of rubbish and confusion my affairs have been involved in, that you alone can be the guide. But I tell you here now, that were it even so, I'd rather heap them on the fire, and stand forth a beggar to the world, than harbour within my doors a man like you!"

The struggle that it cost poor Joe to hear this, without reply,

was great ; but a sense of the deference that throughout a long life he had ever rendered to his master, overpowered all considerations of self. He, indeed, felt that he had been wronged ; he knew all the injustice of the reproach ; but he also bethought him of the many years in which that house had been his home, and that hearth his own. He was not one to remember what he had rendered in return, nor think of the long existence of toil by which he had earned his livelihood. The settled humility, which was the basis of his whole character, made him esteem himself as one whose station excluded all thought of those relations that exist between members of the same community ; and that his conduct should be arraigned, argued that his acts possessed a degree of importance he had never attributed to them.

He heard Fagan therefore, throughout, without any effort at reply ; and, heaving a faint sigh, withdrew.

I have no means of knowing how Gabriac behaved in this trying emergency. All that I have heard came from Raper ; and poor Joe was neither shrewd in his observation of character, nor quick to appreciate motives. The Count decided at once on a return to the Continent ; perhaps he thought there might arise some chance of reconciliation with the father, if Polly, for a time at least, were withdrawn from his sight—perhaps, too, some hope there might be of arrangement of his own affairs. Raper was also to accompany them, in the prospect of finding some clerkship in an office, or some employment in a mercantile house abroad, where his knowledge of languages might be available. At all events, his protection and companionship would be useful to Polly, whenever the Count would be compelled to absent himself from home ; and, lastly, the funds for the enterprise were all supplied by Joe, who contributed something under four hundred pounds, the savings of a whole life of labour !

As for Polly, to the humblest ornament she had ever worn, to the meanest gift she had received in childhood—she left all behind her. Her jewels were worth some thousands—her wardrobe was even splendid ; but she went forth without a gem, and with barely what sufficed her in dress.

“ And what is this ? ” said the Count, half disdainfully touching with his foot what seemed to be an oblong basket of coloured straw.

“ Poor Josephine’s baby ! ” said Polly, with eyes swimming in tears.

“ And is he, is she—whichever it be—to form one of the party ? ” asked he, angrily.

"Can you ask it, Emile? You remember the last words she ever spoke to us on the morning we left the Killeries."

"That unlucky journey!" muttered he; but fortunately not loud enough for her to catch the words.

"The little fellow will soon be able to walk, and to utter some words; he will be company for me when you are away!" said she, sorrowfully.

"L'Ami Joseph ought to fill up that void," said De Gabriac, laughing. "I think myself the very paragon of husbands to accede to the arrangement!"

Strange words were these for her to hear—nor, indeed, could she penetrate their meaning; but Polly's cares at that moment gave little time for thought, for every detail of preparation was left to her. Raper, it is true, did his utmost to aid her, but already De Gabriac had assumed a manner of superiority and command towards Joe, which greatly embarrassed Polly, and compelled her to use every means of keeping them apart.

Thus were they started on the sea of life—does it need much foresight to predict the voyage?



CHAPTER XXIII.

A MOUNTAIN ADVENTURE.

WHY do we all refer to the period of boyhood as one of happiness? It is not that it had not its own sorrows, nor that they were really so light—it is simply because it was the season of hope. In after-life, as deception after deception has checked us—when disappointment has dulled expectancy, we become more practical, less dreamy, and, alas! less happy. The possible and the probable of youth are not the possible and the probable of manhood, still less those of riper age. The realms of boyish fancy are as wide as the great ocean; and we revel in them in all the plenitude of unrestricted power. There is not a budding effort of intellect that we do not magnify to ourselves as the origin of future distinction. We exalt our feats of strength and courage into deeds of heroic daring; and we fancy that the little struggles and crosses we meet with are like the great trials and reverses of after-life; and in our pride of success, we deem ourselves conquerors. Oh! for one day—for even one short hour of that time of glorious delusions! Oh! that I could once more look out upon the world, as one gazes at a sunset at sea, wondering what beauteous lands lie afar off in the distance, and imagining the time when we should be journeying towards them—buoyant—high-hearted—hopeful! Who has ever achieved any success that equalled his boyish ambitions? Who has ever been as great or as good as his early visions have pictured him?

I have already told my reader that my youth was not passed in affluence. Our means were limited to the very merest requirements of existence—our food and our clothing were humble as our dwelling; and I believe that many a sore privation was needed to escape the calamity of debt. Of all these hardships I knew nothing at the time—my experience pointed out none who seemed to possess an existence happy as my own. I had all that unvarying affection and devoted love could bestow. My little turret in winter, the fields and the mountains in summer, made up a glorious world full of interest; and the days seemed never long enough for all my plans of pleasure.

I had no companions of my own age, nor did I feel the want

of them; for when my school-hours were over I was free to follow the caprices of my own fancy. There was in my isolation a sort of independence that I gloried in. To be alone with my own day-dreams—my own ambitious hopes—my own high-soaring thoughts—was an ecstasy of delight that I would not have exchanged for any companionship. The very indulgence of these humours soon rendered me unsuited for association with others, whose ideas and habits appeared to me to be all vain, and trifling, and contemptible. The books of travel and discovery which I loved to read, had filled my mind with those stories of adventure which attend the explorer of unknown lands—the wonders of scenery, and the strange pictures of life and people. There was in the career itself, that blending of heroism and philanthropy—that mingled courage and humanity, which appealed to my heart by its very strongest sympathies; and I felt for these noble and devoted adventurers not less admiration than love. All my solitary rambles through the wild valleys of the neighbourhood—all my lonely walks over mountains, were in imitation of these wanderers, whose hardships I envied, and whose perils I longed to share. Not a rugged crag nor snow-capped summit that I did not name after some far-away land; and every brook and rippling stream became to me the Nile, the Euphrates, or the Ganges. The desolate character of the scenery amidst which we lived—the wide tracts of uninhabited country, favoured these illusions; and for whole days long not an incident would occur to break the spell which fancy had thrown around me.

My kind mother—for so Polly always taught me to call her—seemed to take delight in favouring these self-delusions of mine, and fell readily into all my caprices about locality. She made me, too, with her own hands, a little knapsack to wear; bought me an iron-shod staff, such as Alpine travellers carry; and made me keep a kind of journal of these wanderings, noting down all my accidents and adventures, and recording even the feelings which beset me when afar off and alone in the mountains. So intent did I become at last on these imaginings, that the actual life of school and its duties grew to seem visionary and unreal, and my true existence to be that when wandering through the lonely valleys of the Alps, or sitting in solitude in some far-away gorge of the mountains.

As I grew older I pushed my journeys further, and carried my explorings to the very foot of the Splügen, through that dreariest of all mountain passes, the "Verlohrnes Loch." The savage grandeur of this desolate spot—its gloom, its solitude,

its utter desertion, its almost uninhabitable character, gave it a peculiar attraction in my eyes, for there nothing ever occurred to dispel the colourings of my imagination. There I revelled at will, amidst the wildest flights of my fancy. An old castle, one of the many feudal remains of this tract of country, stood upon a lone crag to the centre of the valley. It seemed as if Nature herself had destined the rock for such a structure, for while there was barely space sufficient at the top, the approach lay by a zig-zag path, rugged and dangerous, cut in the solid granite. When I first saw this rude old tower, the melting snows of early summer had flooded a small rivulet at the base of the crag, and the stream being divided in its course against the rock, swept along on either side, leaving the castle, as it were, on an island.

I had long resolved to scale this cliff, the view from the summit of which I knew would be magnificent, extending for miles both up and down the valley; and, at last, took advantage of my first holiday from school to accomplish my purpose. The Forlorn Glen, as the translation of the name would imply, lay about thirteen miles away by taking the mountain paths, though its distance by road was more than double, and to go and return in the same day required an early start. I set out before day-break, having packed my knapsack with food to last me while I should be away.

I never remember to have felt a greater degree of exhilaration than as I set forth that morning. It was in the month of June, that season of all others the most beautiful in Alpine scenery, since it combines all the charms of spring with the balmy air and more genial atmosphere of summer. The cherry-trees were all in blossom in the glens, and the rich pink of the apricot peeped out from many a little grove. I went along, happy and light-hearted, passing many a spot to which I had given some name of a far-away scene, and recognizing places which once had been to me the utmost limits of my wanderings. So, thought I, shall it be in after-life, and we can look back upon efforts that we once deemed stupendous, and regard them as mere tiny steps in the great steep we are climbing.

I breakfasted at a little waterfall in the midst of the wildest mountain, not a sound save the plashing waters to break the stillness; the birds gathered round me for the crumbs of my meal, and ate them within a few paces of where I sat. There was something that I felt as indescribably touching, in the trustfulness of the humbler creation, in scenes deserted and forsaken of men; and musing on the theme, I arose and pursued my way,

When I reached the Verlohrnes Loch it was still early, and I was delighted to find that the stream at the foot of the castle rock was dwindled down to a mere rivulet, and fordable with ease. I crossed, and at once began the ascent of the crag. Before I had spent half an hour at my task, however, I found that its difficulties were far greater than I had anticipated. The path was often interrupted by masses of fallen rock, and frequently, from long disuse, difficult to hit upon when once lost. Brambles and prickly pears, too, formed terrible obstacles at some places, while at others the rocks were rendered slippery by dripping water, and the danger of a false step was very great. In no wise discouraged, I struggled on; but to my astonishment I could perceive that it was wearing nigh to noon before I had accomplished more than half the ascent. I had therefore to take counsel with myself whether I should abandon my enterprise at once, or resolve to pass the night on the crag, for I readily saw that before I could reach the level plain again it would be too late to resume my homeward road over the mountain, many parts of which required daylight to traverse. Although I had never passed a night away from home, I had often told my mother that I should probably be led to do so, and that she should not feel any alarm at my absence; and she who well knew the honest character of the mountaineers, also knew that I was known to them for miles far around. My resolve was at length taken to pass the night in the shelter of the old castle, and take the following morning for my return.

As the day wore on, the heat grew more and more oppressive; occasional gusts of wind would sweep past, followed by a dead, unbroken stillness, in which not a leaf moved. It seemed as though mysterious spirits of the elemental world were conversing together in this lone region, and the thought impressed me more powerfully as at intervals a low, half-subdued murmuring seemed to rise from the deep glens around me. At first I deemed they were self-delusions, but as I listened I could distinctly trace the sounds as they rose and fell, swelling now to a deep, rolling noise, and then dying away in soft fading cadences.

My mind was stored with stories of supernatural interest, and if I did not implicitly believe the existence of such agencies yet I cannot affirm that I altogether rejected them. I was in that state in which, while reason is unconvinced, the imagination is still impressed, and fears and terrors hold sway, when the very causes of them were stoutly denied reality. One of the commonest of all the superstitions of mountain regions is the belief in a certain genius, who invariably resists the intrusion of mortals

within the precincts of his realm. The terrible tales of his vengeance form the subject of Alpine horrors, and the dreadful miseries of those who have incurred his displeasure point the moral of many a story, and "the Kobold of the Lost Glen" held a proud pre-eminence among such narratives. The heat, as I have said, grew oppressive; it became at last almost stifling, for the clouds descended near the earth, and the atmosphere became dense and suffocating. A few heavy drops of rain then fell, pattering slowly and lazily on the leaves; and then, as if at the word of some dread command, the thunder rolled forth in one long, loud, continuous peal, that seemed to shake the very mountains. Crash after crash followed till the very rocks seemed splitting with the loud artillery, while through the darkness of the murky air, great sheets of yellow lightning gleamed, and long chains of the bright element zig-zagged through the sky; the rain, too, began to fall in torrents, and almost at once the mountain streams swelled and bounded in foamy cataracts from cliff and precipice. The din was deafening, and the loud crashing thunder, with the hissing rain, the rushing rivers, and the dense shaking forests, made up a grand and awful chorus. For a while I found a shelter beneath the thick foliage of the hollies, but the sweeping wind at last rent this frail sanctuary in twain, and in a moment I was drenched thoroughly.

Although still early in the afternoon, a premature night seemed to have set in, for the air grew darker and darker, till at length the mountains at either side of the glen were lost to sight, and a dense watery vapour surrounded the crag on which I stood. My position was not without peril, since if the waters did not abate at the end of some hours, I should be left to starve on the rock. This danger at once occurred to me, and my mind was already overcome by gloomy forebodings. One thing, was, however, certain—I must endeavour to reach the castle before nightfall, for to pass the dark hours where I was would be impossible. The difficulty of the ascent was now increased fourfold; the footing was less secure on the rocks, and dashing torrents tore past with a force that strength like mine could never have combatted. It is with pride that I remember to have looked all those perils boldly in the face; it is, I say, a proud thought to me, even now, that as a mere boy I could meet danger boldly and undauntedly. More than once, indeed, the fatal terrors of my position stood arrayed before me, and I thought that I had seen my dear home and my kind mother for the last time—I could even speculate upon poor Raper's affliction when he came to hear of my calamity. With thoughts

like these I wended my way along, ever upwards and ever more steep and difficult. Although the storm had spent much of its fury, the rain continued to fall in torrents, and the roar of the swollen streams almost equalled the deafening clamour of the thunder. The sudden transition from unbroken silence to the crash and tumult of falling waters is one of the most striking features of Alpine scenery, and suggests, even at moments of the greatest calm and quiet, a sense of forboding peril. The sudden change of temperature, too, from intense heat to an almost biting cold, induces terrific storms of wind, almost tornadoes, by whose violence great trees are torn up by the roots, and vast rocks hurled down from crag and precipice. In turning the angle of a cliff, I came suddenly upon one of these gusts, which carried me completely off my legs, and swept me into a low copse of brushwood, stunned and senseless. I must have remained a considerable time unconscious, for when I came to myself the stars were shining in the dark blue sky of night, and the air calm, serene, and summer-like. It was with difficulty I could remember where I was, and by what chances I had come there; and it was indeed with a sinking heart that I arose, not knowing whither to turn my steps, nor whether my chance of safety lay above or below me.

I was sorely bruised besides, and one of my arms severely injured by my fall, as I discovered in attempting to use my staff. It was at that moment, thoughts of my home came full and forcibly before me; the little chamber where I used to sit for hours in happy occupation; my seat beside the hearth; my place at my mother's wheel, for she used to spin during the hazy days of winter; and, in my despair, I burst into a flood of tears. The excess of grief passed off, and there now succeeded a dogged resolve to accomplish my first purpose, and I again set out for the summit.

I had not proceeded far, when on looking upward towards the sky, I saw, or thought I saw, a light twinkling through the trees above me. The foliage was dense and thick, and grew around the base of the rock which formed the immediate foundation of the castle, so that it was only at certain spots a light, if such there was, could be visible. Onward I pushed now, with a new impulse given by hope; and, to my inexpressible joy, as I rounded the corner of a crag, I came full in sight of the old tower, and saw, from one of the narrow windows, the sparkle of a bright light, that, streaming forth, formed a long line upon the grass.

The window was fully twenty feet from the ground, nor was

the entrance door more than a few feet lower—being one of those fastnesses to which access was had by a ladder, drawn up for safety after entering. Many of these ruined castles in the valley of the Reichenau were, I knew, occupied by the shepherds; some indeed had been converted into refuge-houses for lost travellers, and supplied by the government of the canton with some few appliances of succour. The situation of this one, however, refuted all such possibility, since its very difficulty of approach would have rendered it unavailable for either purpose. As I stood on the little level table-land in front of the old ruin, and gazed upwards at the narrow window from which gleamed the light, all my former superstitious terrors returned, and I felt that cold shrinking of the heart that comes of a danger undefined and incomprehensible; nor am I certain that I would not rather have looked upon the ruin dark and desolate, than with that yellow streak that told of some inhabitant within.

The northern side of the Alpine ranges have few if any traditions of robbers. The horrors with which they are peopled are all those of an immaterial world, so that my mind ranged over the tales of wood-demons, Kobolds, and mountain imps, without one single thought of the perils of banditti; nor was I altogether without a strong prompting of eager curiosity to know what precise shape and semblance these strange creatures wore. Thus impelled, I set about examining the spot, and seeing in what way I might be able to approach the window. The trees on either side were too low, and the ivy which grew against the ruined wall itself offered the only means of ascent. I was an expert climber, and well knew that, though the ivy will often afford good and safe footing, it will always give way beneath the grasp of the hand, and that the stones of the wall would afford me the only security. In this wise it was, therefore, I began the ascent, and, with slow and careful steps, I arrived at last within a few feet of the window-sill. My impatience at this moment overcame all my prudence, and, with an eager spring, I tried to catch the stone, I missed it, and grasping the ivy in my despair, the branches gave way, and, after a brief struggle, and with a loud cry of terror, I fell backwards to the ground.

The stars seemed to flit to and fro above me; trees, mountains, and rocks seemed to heave in mad commotion around; my brain was filled with the wildest images of peril and suffering, and then came blank unconsciousness.



I was sitting rather than lying on a low pallet-bed stretched against the wall; in front of me a window curtained with a much-worn horseman's cloak; and around me in the room, which was lofty and spacious, were a few rudely-fashioned articles of furniture, and two or three utensils for cooking—all of the very meanest kind. My arm was bound with a bandage where I had been bled, and my great debility, and a sense of half-incoherence in all my thoughts, told of severe illness. At a table beneath the window, and bent over it as if writing, sat a tall, very old man, in a coarse woollen blouse of red-brown stuff, with a cap of the same colour and material; sandals, fastened round the ankles with leather thongs, formed the protection of his feet; these, and a belt with a gourd for carrying water attached to it, made up his whole costume.

His face, when he seemed to look towards me, was harshly lined and severe—the lower jaw projected greatly, and the character of the whole expression was cold and stern; but the head was lofty and capacious, and indicated considerable powers of thought and reflection.

There was over me a sense of weakness so oppressive and so overwhelming, that though I saw the objects I have here mentioned, and gazed on them for hours long, yet I made no effort to speak, nor ask where I was, nor to whom I was indebted for shelter and succour. This apathy—for it was, indeed, such—held me entranced, even when the old man would approach the bed to feel my pulse, to bathe my temples with water, or wet my lips with a drink. After these visits he would take his staff from the corner, and leave the room, to which he frequently did not return for many hours. Thus went day after day; monotony over everything; till my head ached with very weariness, as the lazy hours went by. Where was I? Was this state of suffering malady? Or was it imprisonment? Why was I thus? How long should I still continue so? Such were the puzzling questions which would present themselves before me—never to be solved—never replied to.

In my dreamy debility, when my faculties tottered like wearied limbs, I often wondered if I might not have entered upon some new kind of existence, in which long years of such wakeful sorrow should be gone through; and in a mood like this was it that I lay one day all alone, when from the open window there came the thrilling notes of a blackbird, which sat on a tree close by. Not even the kindest words of a fellow-creature could have filled my heart with more ecstasy than those sounds, reminding me of my once happy life—my home, the

little garden of the chateau, and its tangled alleys of fruit-trees and flowering shrubs. I struggled to arise from my bed, and after some efforts I succeeded, and with weak step and trembling limbs, I reached the window and looked out.

Sudden as the change from blackest night to the light of breaking day was the effect that came over me, as I gazed down the valley, and recognized each well-known crag, and cliff, and mountain peak of the Verlohrnes Loch. At once now came back all memory of my adventure and the night of the storm; and at once I saw that I was standing at the window of that old ruin which had been the goal of my wandering.

How I longed to learn what interval of time had gone over! I tried to calculate it by remembering that it was early summer when I came, but still the trees wore no tokens of coming autumn. They were bright in foliage, and leafy, and the streams that traversed the valley were small and tiny rills, that showed no touch of the season of rains. From these observations I now addressed myself to an inspection of the interior. Well used as I had been to habits of poverty, the aspect of this chamber still struck me with astonishment. The only thing like food was some Indian corn meal, carefully covered up in an iron vessel, and a jar of water; of clothing, the cloak which formed the window-curtain, and a sheepskin fashioned into a rude resemblance to a coat, were all that were to be seen. The furniture consisted of a low stool and a single chair, the trunk of an elm tree representing a table. On this, however, an attempt at a desk had been made, and here, to my astonishment, were now masses of papers, covered with figures from top to bottom—algebraic signs and calculations without end! Not one word of writing, not a phrase in any language, was to be met with, but page after page of these mystical sums, which seemed to be carried on from one sheet of paper to the other. How eagerly I sought out something which might give me a clue to the writer of these figures, but in vain; I pored over them long and carefully—I studied their form and their size. I tried—how hopelessly—to trace out some purpose in the calculations, and to divine their object and end—but to no avail! I had heard tell of persons whose intellects had been deranged by the intense study of a difficult problem—the search after some unattainable object in science. I had read wonderful stories of long years of toilsome labour—whole lives passed in an arduous struggle, till death had at last relieved them from a contest with the “impossible.” Could the writer of these be the victim of such a delusion? Might he have sought out this lone spot, to

live apart and away from all the distracting influences of life, and to devote himself to some such task? Had his mind given way under this pressure, or had weakened faculties first led to this career? All these doubts presented themselves to me in turns; and again I turned to the complex pages of figures to assist my conjectures.

Alas! they could convey nothing to me—they were symbols only of so much toil and labour, but to what end or object I could not guess. As I sat thus, I thought that I detected an error in one of the calculations. It was an algebraic quantity mis-stated; and, on looking down, I remarked that the mistake was repeated over and over, through a long series of figures. Any proficiency I had ever attained at school was in matters of this kind, owing, as I did, everything to Raper's guidance and instruction; so that I found little difficulty in ascertaining that this error had really occurred, and in all likelihood marred all the deductions to be hoped from the calculation.

To escape from the dreamy vacuity of my late life, by an actual occupation, was an unspeakable relief; and I felt in the pursuit all the interest of an adventurer. There was something positive, tangible, real, as it were, here, instead of that boundless expanse of doubt over which my mind had been wandering, and I addressed myself to the task with eagerness. The error first discovered had led to others, and I diligently traced out all its consequences; and making the fitting corrections, I set forth the results on a slip of paper that I found, happily, clear of figures.

So tired was I with the unaccustomed exertion, that, when I had done, I had barely reached my bed ere I fell off in a deep and heavy sleep. I awoke late in the night, for so I judged it from the starry sky which I could see through the open window. The old man sat at his usual seat beside the desk; and with his head supported by his hands, seemed to study the pages before him. The flickering lamp-light that fell upon his worn features, his snow-white beard, his wrinkled forehead, and thick-veined hands, together with the heavy folds of the cloak which, for warmth, he had thrown over his shoulders, made him resemble one of those alchemists or astrologers we see in Dutch pictures. I had not looked long at him till I saw that he was pondering over the corrections I had made, and trying to remember if they were by his own hand. At last he turned suddenly round, and fixed his eyes on me. Mine met the glance, and thus we remained for some seconds staring steadily at each other. He then rose slowly like one fatigued from exertion, and, with the

paper in his hand, approached the bed. How my heart beat as he drew nigh! how I wondered what words he would utter—what accents he would speak in, and in what mood of mind.

He came slowly forward, and seating himself beside my bed on the low stool, he pointed to the figures on the paper, and said in the Romaic dialect of the mountaineers, the one word, "Yours?" Though the word was uttered in the peasant dialect, the tone of the voice was not that of a "Bauer;" and, reassured by thinking that he might be of superior condition, I answered him at once in French.

"Is that your native tongue?" said he, replying to me in the same language.

I shook my head in negative.

"You are a German boy, then?" said he.

"Nor that, either," replied I. "I am English."

"English! you English, and in this place!" cried he, in astonishment. "From what part of England do you come?" said he, in English, which he spoke as a native.

"I came from Ireland. My father was of that country. My mother, I have heard, was French."

"You have heard! So that you do not know it of yourself?"

"I never remember to have seen either of them."

"Your name?"

"Carew—Jasper Carew."

"I recollect one of that name," said he, pondering for some time. "But he could not have been your father. And how came you here?"

In a few words I told him of my adventure, and in doing so revealed such habits as appeared to interest him, for he questioned me closely about my wanderings, and the causes which at first suggested them. In turn I asked and learned from him, that several weeks had elapsed since my accident; that numerous scouts had traversed the glen, evidently sent in search of me, but that for reasons which regarded himself, he had not spoken with, nor, indeed, been seen by any of them, but still had written a few lines to the Curé of Reichenau to say that I was in safety, and should be soon restored to my friends. This he had conveyed to the post by night, but without suffering any clue to escape from whence it came.

"And these figures are yours?" said he, referring to the paper.

I nodded, and he went on:—

"What toilsome nights, boy, had I been spared, if I had but

detected this error. These mistakes have marred whole weeks of labour. I must have been ill. My head must have been suffering, to have fallen into error like this; for see, here are far deeper and more abstruse calculations—all correct, all accurate. But who can answer for moments of weakness!"

He sighed heavily, and the stern expression of his features assumed a look of softened, but suffering meaning.

"I have often thought," said he, hastily, "that if another were joined with me in this task, its completeness would be more certain; while to trust myself alone with this secret is both unwise and unjust. Human life is the least certain of all things. To-morrow I may be no more. I have already passed through enough to have brought many to the grave. You, however, are young. You have yet, in all likelihood, long years of life before you. What if you were to become my associate?"

I gave no reply for some seconds. When he repeated his words still more forcibly,—

"I should first learn what it is I should be engaged in," said I. "I should be satisfied that the object was just, reasonable, and, above all, practicable."

"You speak like a sage, boy," cried he. "Whence came such wisdom as this?"

"All my teachings of this kind," said I, "have come from her who now calls herself my mother, and whom I love with a son's affection."

"And how is she called?"

I could not tell him. I only knew her as one who was as a mother to me, and yet said she had no title to that name. Once or twice I had heard her addressed as the Countess. There ended my knowledge of her condition.

"She is rich, then?" asked he.

"Far from it," said I, sorrowfully.

"Then can I make her so," exclaimed he. "Joined with me in this mighty enterprise, you can be the richest and the greatest man of the age. Nay, child, this is not matter to smile at. I am no dreamer—no moon-struck student of the impossible. I do not ponder over those subtle combinations of metals that are to issue forth in yellow gold, nor do I labour to distil the essences which are to crystallise into rubies. What I strive at has been reached already—the goal won, the prize enjoyed! Ay, by my own father. By him was this brilliant discovery proclaimed triumphantly before the face of Europe."

The exultation with which he uttered these words seemed to

carry him away in thought from the scene wherein he stood, and his eyes gleamed with a strange fire, and his lips continued to mutter rapidly. Then ceasing of a sudden, he said,—

“I must seek her—she will recognize me, for she will have heard our history. She will give her permission, too, to you to join me in my great design. The fate that sent you hither was no accident. Boy, there are none such in life. Our passions in their wilfulness colour destiny with fitful changes, and these we call chance; but in nature all is predetermined, and by plan.”

Now, rambling on this wise—now, stopping to question me as to who we were, whence we came, and with what objects, he continued to talk till, fairly overcome by weariness, I dropt off to sleep, his loud tones still ringing in my ears through my dreams.

The following day he never left me; he seemed insatiable in his desire to learn what progress I had made in knowledge, and how far my acquirements extended. For classical learning and literature he evinced no respect. These, and modern languages, he said, were mere accomplishments that might adorn a life of ease and luxury; but that to a man who would be truly great there was but one subject of inquiry—the source of wealth, and the causes which make states affluent. These, he said, were the legitimate subjects for high intelligence to engage upon. “Master these,” said he, “and monarchs are your vassals.” I was amazed to discover that amid the mass of prejudices which encumbered his mind, it was stored with information the most various and remarkable. It was evident, too, that he had lived much in the great world, and was familiar with all its habits and opinions. As time wore on, I learned from him that his present life, with all its privations, was purely voluntary—that he possessed sufficient means to support an existence of comfort and ease; “but,” added he, “if you would give the intelligence a supremacy, it must be done at the cost of animal enjoyment. If the body is to be pampered, the brain will take its ease. To this end came I here; to this end have I lived fourteen years of toil and isolation. I have estranged myself from all that could distract me—friendships, pleasures, the great events of the age—I know none of them! I am satisfied to toil and think now, that, in after-ages, men should hold my name in reverence, and regard my memory with affection.”

Although he constantly made allusions of this kind, he never proceeded to give me any closer insight into his designs; and if at moments the reasonableness of his manner and the strong

force of his remarks impressed me favourably with regard to his powers of mind, at others I was induced to think that nothing short of erring faculties could have condemned a man to a voluntary life of such abject want and of such cruel privation as he endured.

It was still some weeks before I had strength to return home, but he permitted me to write every second day to my mother and Raper, from whom I heard in return. If, at first, my ardent longing to be once more at home—to be with those who made up the whole world of my existence—surpassed all other thoughts, I grew day by day to feel the strange fascination of an unknown interest in the subject of his talk, and to experience an intense anxiety to know his secret.

It was evident that he felt the influence he had obtained over me, and was bent on extending and enlarging it, for constantly would he dwell upon the themes which attracted me and fascinated my attention. Shall I confess what these were? The brilliant pictures of courtly life, the splendour and fascination of a palace, where all that could charm and captivate abounded, and all were at the feet of one who, not a king, was yet greater than a king, and who in the mighty power of his intellect held kings and kaisers as his bond slaves.

That these were not mere fancies he assured me by saying,—
“This has been witnessed by all Europe; it is not more than fifty years ago that the world has seen all that I tell you. When I can convince you of this, will you pledge yourself to be my follower?”

I at once gave my promise, and ratified it by a solemn vow.
The next day we started on our return to Reichenau.



CHAPTER XXIV.

"THE HERR ROBERT."

I WILL not attempt to describe the welcome that met me on my return, nor the gratitude with which my mother overwhelmed my kind protector. The whole school, and no inconsiderable part of the village itself, had gone forth to meet us, and we were conducted back in a sort of triumph. Over and over again was I obliged to recount my story, of which the mystery still remained unexplained. Who and what was the strange recluse who so long had inhabited the castle of the Forlorn Glen, and who now stood before them, old and simply clad, but still bearing unmistakable marks of having been a person of some condition?

As Mr. Robert he desired to be known by me, and as such was he received by my mother. He declined the offer she freely made him of a room in her own small house, and hired a little lodging in the toll-house on the bridge, and which he said was convenient to the garden of the chateau, where he obtained the liberty of walking. If the interest which he manifested in me was at first a cause of anxiety to my mother, not knowing what it portended, nor how far it might contribute to withdraw my affection from herself, it was clear that she soon became satisfied with whatever explanation he afforded, and that those long conversations, frequently prolonged to a late hour of the night, which they held together, had the effect of reconciling her to his views and intentions.

Thus was a new individual introduced into the little circle of our family party, and each Sunday saw him seated at our dinner-table, of which his conversation formed the great charm. It was not alone that his mind was stored with varied information, the most rare and curious, but his knowledge of the world itself and of mankind seemed more remarkable still; and frequently, after he had left us of an evening, have I overheard my mother express her wonder to Raper who and what he had been, and by what strange events he was reduced to his present condition. These remarks of hers at first showed me that whatever revelations he might have made in his long interviews

with her, he had told little or nothing of his own story. Such was indeed the case, and I can remember well a little scene, in itself unimportant and of no consequence, which can both portray my mother's intense curiosity on this theme, and display some traits of him for whom it was excited.

It happened that at the period when her little quarterly pittance came due, my mother was confined to home by a slight feverish cold, and Herr Klann, the banker and money-changer of the village, was condescending enough to come in person and hand her the amount. In spite of her narrow fortune, my mother had always been treated with a marked deference by the village, and Herr Klann demeaned himself on the occasion with every show of courtesy and politeness. He, indeed, did not scruple to display that he was the great depositary of riches for miles and miles around ; that all the relations of trade and commerce—all the circumstances of family fortune—the dowries of brides, the portions of younger sons, were in his charge and keeping. He talked much of the responsibility of his station and its requirements, and, like many others, while encomiumising his secrecy he exhibited the very opposite quality. There was not a house in the village or its neighbourhood of which he did not incidentally relate some story or incident. He became, in fact, candour itself in his confessions. It is but fair to own that my mother looked most becomingly in her half invalid costume, and that the little straw-wrapped flask of “Siebenberger” with which she regaled him was excellent. Herr Klann was a man to acknowledge both such influences. He possessed the Hebrew weaknesses, both as regards gold and beauty. He therefore became largely confidential—taking a survey of the whole neighbourhood, and revealing their circumstances with the minute anatomy that a surgeon might have employed in displaying their structure. My mother heard him with no peculiar interest, till by accident he alluded to the “Herr Robert;” it was a mere reference to the toll-house, where he lived, but the name at once awakened her attention.

“With him, I conclude,” said she, “your monied dealings are few. He does not appear to be wealthy.”

“He is a mystery, in every way, madam,” replied Klann, “his very cash does not come through a banker or an agent ; he has no credit, no bills—nothing. He comes down to me at times, say once a-month or so, to change a few gold pieces—they are always ‘Louis’ I remark, and sometimes of the time of the late reign. They are good money, and full weight invariably, that I must say.”

"And what may be your own opinion of all this?"

"I can form none—positively none, madam. Of course, I need not say that I regret the vulgar notion in the village, that he is in communication with supernatural agencies; neither you nor I, madam, are likely to fall into this absurd mistake."

"And so you rather incline to suppose——" She drew out the words tardily, and fixed on Herr Klann a look of ineffable softness and intelligence together.

"I do, madam—that is my private opinion," said he, sentimentously.

"Would that account for the life he has been leading for some years back—should we have found him passing such a long term in isolation from all the world?" asked she.

"I think so, madam, and I will tell you why. The agents employed by the regency, and in the beginning of the present reign in France, were all men of certain condition—many of them belonged to high families, and, having ruined their fortunes by extravagance, were fain to take any occupation for mere subsistence. Some of them resided as nobles in Vienna, and were received at the court of the Empress. Others gained admittance to St. James's. They were supplied with money, both for purposes of play and bribery; and that they used such means to good account is now matter of history. When the game was played out, and they were no longer needed by the government, such men were obliged to retire from the stage whereon they had only played a part. The Duc de Senneterre went into a monastery; Count Leon De Rhode set off for the New World; and there was one taken ill in this very village, whose name I now forget, who had gone into the priesthood, and was head of a seminary in Flanders. What more likely, then, than that our friend at the bridge yonder was some great celebrity of those times, of which I hear he loves to talk and declaim?"

The hint thus thrown out made a deep impression on my mother. It served to explain not only many circumstances of Herr Robert's position, but also to account for the strange glimpses of a great and glorious future, in which, at moments of excitement he would indulge. A life of intrigue and plot would naturally enough suggest ambitious hopes, and conduce to the very frame of mind which he appeared to reach. That I should become the follower of such a man, and the disciple of such a school, revolted against all her feelings. The spy, no matter how highly accredited and how richly rewarded, was, in

her eyes, the most ignoble of all careers ; and she would rather have seen me clad in the sheepskin of an Alpine shepherd than wearing, in this capacity, the decorations of every order of Europe.

From the moment, therefore, the suspicion crossed her mind that Herr Robert had been such, she firmly determined to withdraw me altogether from his intimacy. Nor was the step an easy one. He had become a recognised member of our little household ; each evening saw him seated at our hearth or board ; on every Sunday he dined with us. His little presents of wine and fruit, and occasionally of books, showed that he intended reciprocity to be a basis of our intercourse, of which, indeed, the balance lay in our favour. How, therefore, was such a state of things to be suddenly arrested ? How bring to an abrupt conclusion an intimacy of which nothing had hitherto interrupted the peaceful course ? This was a matter of no common difficulty, and for several days did she ponder over it to herself.

It chanced that, for the first time since her arrival at Reichenau, Herr Robert had been slightly indisposed, and being unable to come and see us, had sent for me to come each evening and read to him. At any other moment my mother would have thought no more of this, but coming now, at the very time when her feelings of doubt and suspicion were torturing her, she regarded the circumstance with actual apprehension.

At first, she thought of sending Raper along with me, in the guise of protector, but as Herr Robert had not requested his company, there seemed an awkwardness in this ; then she half resolved to refuse me permission, on pretence of requiring my presence at home—this, too, would look ungracious ; and when at last she did accord her leave, it was for a very limited time, and with strict injunctions to be back by an early hour.

It chanced that Herr Robert felt on this evening a more than ordinary desire to be frank and confidential. He related to me various anecdotes of his early days, the scenes he had mixed in, and the high associates with whom he was intimate ; and when he had excited my curiosity and wonderment to a high degree, by gorgeous narratives of the great world, he stopped short and said—“I would not have you think, Jasper, that these dukes and princes were more gifted or more endowed than other men ; the only real difference between them is, that they employ their faculties on great events, not little ones : and all their pleasures, their amusements, their very vices, react upon

the condition of mankind in general, and consequently whatever goes forward in their society has a certain amount of importance, not for itself, but for what may follow it."

These words made a profound impression upon me, leading to the conviction, that out of this charmed circle life had no ambition worth striving for, no successes that deserved a struggle. From my mother I had no concealment, and before I went to my bed I told her all that the Herr Robert had said to me, and showed how deeply this sentiment had sunk into my mind.

I conclude that it must have been from some relation to her former fears she took immediate alarm at the possible bent my mind was receiving. Assuredly she deemed that his influence over me was not without peril, and resolved the following morning to send for the Herr Robert, and in all frankness avow her fears, and appeal to his friendship to allay them.

I was about to set off for school when the old man was ascending the stairs, and taking me by the hand he led me back again into the little chamber, where my mother awaited him.

"Let Jasper remain with us, madam," said he; "the few words of your note have shown me what is passing in your mind, and it will save you and me a world of explanation if he be suffered to be present."

My mother assented, not over willingly, perhaps, and the old man taking a seat, at once began,—

"If I had ever suspected, madam, that my history could have possibly possessed any interest for you, you should certainly have heard it ere now. My opinion was, however, different; and I thought, moreover, that as I had strictly abstained from encroaching upon your confidence, an equal reserve might have protected mine. Forgive me, if by any accident the slightest word should escape me to cause you pain or displeasure. Nothing can be further from my thoughts than this intention, and I beg of you so to receive whatever I say.

"Some years ago, a physician, in whom I had and have the fullest confidence, forewarned me that if certain symptoms which I then laboured under, should ever recur, my case would be beyond remedy, and my life could not be prolonged many days. Two days since, the first signs of these became evident; yesterday the appearance became more palpable; to-day I recognise them in full force. When a man of my age talks of his approaching death, he only speaks of what has been before his thoughts every day and every night for years back.

Whatever benefit I was ever capable of rendering my fellow men in my younger days, I have been latterly a useless and profitless member of the guild, and for this reason, that though time had not effaced my powers of intellect, the energy and the force that should develop them was gone. Without youth there is no vitality; without vitality, no action; without action, no success. I often fancied that results might arise, if to the mature thoughts and experience of age were to be added the fire, the energy, and the passion of youth. If caution and rashness, reserve and intrepidity—the distrust that comes of knowing men, with that credulous hope that stirs the young heart, were all to centre in one nature, what might we not effect? The fate that brought Jasper and myself together whispered to me that he might become such! I pictured to my mind the training he should go through, the hard discipline of work and labour, and yet without impairing in the slightest that mainspring of all power, the daring courage and energy of a young and brave spirit. To this end, he should incur no failures in early life, never know a reverse till it could become to him the starting point for higher success. And thus launched upon life with every favouring breeze of fortune, what might not be predicted of his course?

“He who would stand high among his fellow men, and be regarded as their benefactor and superior during his lifetime, must essentially be a man of action! The great geniuses of authorship, the illustrious in art, have received their best rewards from posterity; contemporaries have attacked them, depreciated and reviled them; the very accidents of their lives have served to injure the excellence of their compositions. But the man of action stands forth to his own age great and distinguished; the world on which his services have bestowed benefits is proud to reward him! and either as a legislator, a conqueror, or a discoverer, his claims meet full acknowledgment.

“Who would not be one of these, then?—who would not aspire to win the enthusiasm that tracks such a career, and makes a mere mortal godlike?

“To be such I possessed the secret! Nay, madam, this is not the weakness of faltering intellect, nor the outpouring of a silly vanity. Hear me out with patience but a very little longer. It is not of some wonder of science or of mystery, of occult art, that I speak, and yet the power to which I allude is infinitely greater than any of these were ever fancied to bestow. Imagine an engine, by which the failing energies of a whole nation can be rallied, its wasting vigour repaired, its resources invigorated.

Fancy a nation—millions—brought out of poverty, debt, and distress, into wealth, affluence, and abundance; the springs of their industry reinforced, the sources of their traffic refreshed. Picture to your mind the change from an embarrassed government, a ruined aristocracy, an indebted, poverty-stricken people, to a full treasury, a splendid nobility, and a prosperous and powerful nation. Imagine all this, and then if you can ascribe the transformation to the working of one man's intelligence, what will you say of him?

"I am not conjuring up a mere visionary or impossible triumph; what I describe has been actually done, and he who accomplished it was my own father!

"Yes, madam, the mightiest financial scheme the world has ever witnessed, the grandest exemplification of the principle of credit that has ever been promulgated by man, was his invention. He farmed the whole revenues of France, and at one stroke annihilated the peculation of receivers-general, and secured the revenue of the nation. He fructified the property of the state by employing its vast resources in commercial speculations; from the east to the west, from the fertile valley of the Mississippi to the golden plains of Asia, he opened every land to the enterprise of Frenchmen. Paris itself he made the capital city of the world. Who has not heard of the splendour of the regency; of Chantilly, the gorgeous palace of the Duc d'Orleans, the very stables more magnificent than the residences of many princes? The wealth and the rank of Europe flocked thither; and in the pleasures of that paradise of capitals lies the history of an age! He who did all this was my own father, and his name was John Law, of Lauriston! Ay, madam, you see before you, poor, humbly clad, and grey-haired, going down to the grave in actual want, the son of a man who once counted his revenue by millions, whose offerings to the Church of St. Roch would have made a meet dowry for a princess, and whose very menials acquired fortunes such as modern nobility cannot equal."

As he spoke, he drew forth a large silver-clasped pocket-book, and opening it, took out a mass of papers.

"I do not ask you to take any part of this on trust," continued he. "There, with the seal of the chancellor, and the date, January the 5th, 1720, is his patent as comptroller-general of France. Here are letters from the Regent, the Prince of Deux Ponts, the Duke of Rohan; I leave them in your hands, and will send you others that authenticate all I have stated. Of my own life, humble and uneventful, I have no wish to speak;

more than this I know, for I have long studied the great principles of my father's secret. The causes of his reverses I have thoroughly investigated; they are not inherent in the system, nor are they reasonably attributable to it in any way. His discovery must not be disparaged by the vices of a profligate prince, a venal administration, and an ignorant cabinet; nor must the grandeur of his conception be charged with the rash infatuation of a nation of gamblers. Law's system stands free from every taint of dishonesty, when dissociated with the names of those who prostituted it. For years long have I studied the theory, and tested it by every proof within my power. To make the fact known to the world; to publish abroad the great truth, that credit well based and fortified is national wealth, and that national wealth, so based, is almost boundless—this became the object of my whole life. I knew that a certain time must elapse, ere the disasters that followed my father's downfall were forgotten; and that I should, in all likelihood, never live to see the day when his glorious system would be revived, and his memory vindicated; but I hoped to have found one worthy to inherit this secret, and in whose keeping it might be transmitted to after ages. I will not weary you with the story of all my disappointments, the betrayals, and the treachery, and the falsehoods I have endured. Enough! I became a recluse from mankind. I gave myself up to my old pursuits of calculation and combination, undisturbed; and I have lived on, to this hour, with one thought ever before me, and one fear—is this great secret to die out with me? and are countless millions of men destined to toil and slavery, while this vast source of affluence and power shall lie rusting and unused?”

The intense fervour of his voice, and his tone of self-conviction as he spoke, had evidently impressed my mother strongly in his favour; and when she turned over, one by one, the letters before her, and read passages penned by the hand of Du Pin, the chief secretary of the Regent, D'Argenson, Alberoni the Cardinal, and others of like station, and then turned to look on the feeble and wasted figure of the old man, her eyes filled with tears of pity and compassion.

“My heart is now relieved of a weary load,” said he, sighing. “Now, I shall go back to my home, and to-morrow, if I be not able to come here, you and Jasper will visit me, for I have still much to tell you.”

My mother did her utmost to detain him where he was. She saw that the excitement of his narrative had greatly increased

the symptoms of fever upon him, and she wished to tend and watch over him; but he was resolute in his determination, and left us, almost abruptly.

Raper and myself went several times that evening to see him, but he would not receive us. The reply to our inquiries was, that he was deeply engaged, and could not be disturbed. I remember well how often during the night I arose from my bed to look out at the little window of the toll-house, which was that of Herr Robert's room. A light burned there the whole night through, and more than once I could see his figure pass between it and the window. Poor old man!—was it that he was devoting the last few hours of his life to the weary task that had worn him to a very shadow? Towards daybreak I sank into a heavy sleep, from which I was suddenly awakened by Raper calling on me to get up and dress at once.

"Herr Robert is dying!" said he, "and wishes to see you and speak with you. Be quick, for there is not a moment to lose."

I dressed myself as speedily as my trembling limbs would permit, and followed Raper down the stairs, and into the street. My mother was already there, waiting for us, and we hurried along towards the toll-house without a word.

The toll-keeper's wife beckoned to us impatiently as we came in sight, and we pressed eagerly on, and entered the little chamber where Herr Robert lay, half-dressed, upon his bed. He knew us, and took each of us by the hand as we came forward. His face was greatly flushed, and his eyes stared wildly, and his dry, cracked lips muttered frequently and fast. Several large packages of papers lay beside him sealed and addressed, and to these he made a motion with his hand, as if he would speak of them.

"Tell us of yourself, Herr Robert," said my mother, in a kind voice, as she sat down beside him. "Do you feel any pain?"

He seemed not to hear her, but muttered indistinctly to himself. Then, turning short round to me, he said—

"I have forgotten the number of the house, but you can't mistake it. It is the only one with a stone balcony over the entrance gate. It was well enough known once. John Law's house—the 'Rue Quincampoix.' The room looks to the back—and the safe. Who is listening to us?"

I re-assured him, and he went on—

"The ingots were forged as if coming from the gold mines of Louisiana. D'Argenson knew the trick, and the Regent too. They it was who wrecked him. They and Tencivi."

His eyes grew heavy, and his voice subsided to a mere murmur after this, and he seemed to fall off in a drowsy stupor. The whole of that day and the next he lingered on thus, breathing heavily, and at intervals seeming to endeavour to rally himself from the oppression of sleep, but in vain! Exhaustion was complete, and he passed away calmly, and so quietly, that we did not mark the moment when he ceased to breathe.

My mother led me away weeping from the room; and Raper remained to look after his papers, and make the few arrangements for his humble burial.

The same day that we laid him in the earth, came a letter from the Count de Gabriac, to say that he would be with us on the morrow. It was the only letter he had written for several months past, and my mother's joy was boundless at the prospect of seeing him. Thus did sunshine mingle with shadow in our life, and tears of happiness mingle with those of sorrow!



CHAPTER XXV.

THE COUNT DE GABRIAC.

I HAD often heard that the day which should see the Count restored to us would be one of festivity and enjoyment. Again and again had we talked over all our plans of pleasure for that occasion; but the reality was destined to bring black disappointment! We were returning in sadness from the toll-house, when a messenger came running to tell of the Count's arrival; and my mother, leaving me with Raper, to whom she whispered a few hurried words, hastened homewards.

I thought it strange that she had not taken me along with her, but I walked along silently at Raper's side, lost in my own thoughts, and not sorry to have for my companion one little likely to disturb them. We sauntered onward through some meadows that skirted the river; and at last, coming down to the stream, seated ourselves by the brink, each still sunk in his own reflections.

It was a bright day of midsummer: the air had all that exhilaration peculiar to the season in these Alpine districts. The stream ran clear as crystal at our feet; and the verdure of grass and foliage was in its full perfection. But one single object recalled a thought of sorrow, and that was the curtained window of the little chamber wherein Herr Robert lay dead.

To this spot my eyes would return, do what I could; and thither, too, sped all my thoughts, in spite of me. The influence which for some time back he had possessed over me was perfectly distinct from that which originates in affectionate attachment. Indeed all his appeals to me were the very reverse of such. His constant argument was, that a man fettered by affection, and restricted by ties of family, was worthless for all purposes of high ambition; and that for the real successes of life, one must sacrifice everything like individual enjoyment. So far had he impressed me with these notions, that I already felt a kind of pleasure in little acts of self-denial, and rose in my own esteem by slight traits of self-restraint. The comparative isolation in which I lived, and my estrangement from those of my own age, favoured this impression, and I grew by degrees to look upon the sports and pleasures of boyhood with all the disdainful compassion of an old ascetic.

I remember well how, as I lay in the deep grass and watched the rippling circles of the fast-flowing river, that a sudden thought shot through me. What if all this theory should prove but a well-disguised avarice—that this passion for distinction be only the thirst for wealth—these high purposes of philanthropy but another scheme for self-advancement! Is it possible that for such a price as this I would surrender all the enjoyments of youth, and all the budding affections of coming manhood?

“Mr. Joseph,” said I, suddenly, “what is the best life?”

“How do you mean, Jasper? Is it, how shall a man do most good to others?” said he.

“Not alone that; but how shall he best employ his faculties for his own sake?”

“That may mean for his personal advancement, Jasper, for objects purely selfish, and be the reverse of what your first question implied.”

“When I said the best, I meant the wisest,” replied I.

“The wisest choice is that of a career every duty of which can be fulfilled without the sacrifice of kindly affections, or the relinquishment of family ties. He who can adopt such is both wise and happy.”

"Are you happy, Mr. Joseph?" asked I, "for I know you are wise."

"Far more happy than wise, Jasper," said he, smiling. "For one like me, life has borne many blessings."

"Like you!" exclaimed I, in surprise, for to my thinking he was a most enviable mortal; I knew of no one so learned, nor of such varied acquirements. "Like you, Mr. Joseph!"

"Just so, Jasper; I, who have had neither home nor family, have yet found both; I, whom no ties of affection encircled, have lived to feel what it is to be cared for; and I, that almost despaired of being aught to any one, have found that I can be of use to those whom it is my chief happiness to love."

"Tell me your history, Mr. Joseph, or, at least, tell me something about yourself."

"My story, my dear Jasper, is but the history of my own day. The least eventful of lives would be adventurous if placed alongside of mine. I began the world such as you see me, poor, humble-minded, and lowly. I continue my journey in the same spirit that I set out. The tastes and pursuits that then gave me pleasure are still the same real sources of enjoyment to me. What were duties are now delights. Your dear mother was once my pupil as you are now; and it is my pride to see that she has neither forgotten our old lessons, nor lived to think them valueless. Even here have I seen her fall back upon the pursuits which occupied her childhood; ay, and they have served to lighten some gloomy hours too."

Raper quickly perceived, from the anxiety with which I had listened, that he had already spoken too much; and he abruptly changed the topic by saying,—

"How we shall miss the poor Herr Robert! He had grown to seem one of ourselves!"

"And is my mother unhappy, Mr. Joseph?" said I, recurring to the former remarks.

"Which of us can claim an exemption from sorrow, Jasper? Do you not think that the little village yonder, in that cleft of the mountain—secluded as it looks—has not its share of this world's griefs? Are there not the jealousies, and the rivalries, and the heartburnings of large communities within that narrow spot?"

While he was yet speaking, a messenger came to summon me home. The Countess, he said, was waiting dinner for me, and yet no invitation came for Raper. He seemed, however, not to notice the omission, but taking my hand, led me along homeward. I saw that some strong feeling was working within, for

twice or thrice he pressed my hand fervently, and seemed as if about to say something, and then, subduing the impulse, he walked on in silence.

"Make my respectful compliments to the Count, Jasper," said he, as we came to the door, "and say that I will wait upon him when it is his pleasure to see me."

"That would be now, I'm sure," said I, eagerly.

"Perhaps not so soon; he will have so much to say to your mother. Another time;" and, hurriedly shaking my hand, he retired.

As I slowly, step by step, mounted the stair, I could not help asking myself, was this the festive occasion I had so often pictured to myself?—was this the happy meeting I had looked forward to so longingly? As I drew near the door, I thought I heard a sound like a heavy sob; my hand trembled when I turned the handle of the lock and entered the room.

"This is Jasper," said my mother, coming towards me, and trying to smile through what I could see were recent tears.

The Count was seated on an easy chair, still dressed in the pelisse he had worn on the journey, and with his travelling-cap in his hand. He struck me as a handsome and distinguished-looking man, but with a countenance that alike betrayed passion and intemperance. The look he turned on me as I came forward was assuredly not one of kindness or affection, nor did he extend his hand to me in sign of salutation.

"And this is Jasper!" repeated he slowly after my mother. "He isn't tall of his age, I think."

"We have always thought him so," said my mother gently, "and assuredly he is strong and well grown."

"The better able will he be to brave fatigue and hardship," said he, sternly. "Come forward, sir, and tell me something about yourself. What have they taught you at school?—has Raper made you a book-worm, dreamy and good-for-nothing as himself?"

"Would that he had made me resemble him in anything!" cried I, passionately.

"It were a pity such a moderate ambition should go unrewarded," replied he, with a sneer. "But to the purpose. What do you know?"

"Little, sir; very little."

"And what can you do?"

"Even less."

"Hopeful, at all events," rejoined he, with a shrug of the

shoulders. "They haven't made you a scholar. They surely might have trained you to something."

My mother, who seemed to suffer most acutely during this short dialogue, here whispered something in his ear, to which he as hastily replied,—

"Not a bit of it. I know him better than that; better than you do. Come, sir," added he, turning to me, "the Countess tells me that you are naturally sensitive, quick to feel censure, and prone to brood over it. Is this the case?"

"I scarcely know if it be," said I. "I have but a slight experience of it."

"Ay, that's more like the truth," said he, gaily. "The language of blame is not familiar to him. So, then, from Raper you have learned little. Now, what has the great financier and arch-swindler Law taught you?"

"Emile, Emile," broke in my mother, "this is not a way to speak to the boy, nor is it by such lessons he will be trained to gratitude and affection."

"Even there, then, will my teaching serve him," said he, laughingly. "From all that I have seen of life, these are but unprofitable emotions."

I did not venture to look at my mother; but I could hear how her breathing came fast and thick, and could mark the agitation she was under.

"Now, Jasper," said he, "sit down here beside me, and let us talk to each other in all confidence and sincerity. You know enough of your history to be aware that you are an orphan; that both your parents died leaving you penniless, and that to this lady, whom till now you have called your mother, you owe your home."

My heart was full to bursting, and I could only clasp my mother's hand, and kiss it passionately, without being able to utter a word.

"I neither wish to excite your feelings, nor to weary you," said he, calmly, "but it is necessary that I should tell you we are not rich. The fact, indeed, may have occurred to you already," said he, with a disdainful gesture of his hand, while his eye ranged over the poverty-stricken chamber where we sat. "Well," resumed he, "not being rich, but poor; so poor that I have known what it is to feel hunger and thirst, and cold, for actual want. Worse again," cried he, with a wild and savage energy, "have felt the indignity of being scoffed at for my poverty, and seen the liveried scullions of a great house make jests upon my thread-bare coat and worn hat. It has been my own choosing,

however, all of it!" and as he spoke, he arose and paced the room, with strides that made the frail chamber tremble beneath the tread.

"Dearest Emile," cried my mother, "let us have no more of this. Remember that it is so long since we met. Pray keep these sad reflections for another time, and let us enjoy the happiness of being once more together."

"I have no time for fooling, madame," said he, sternly. "I have come a long and weary journey about this boy. It is unlikely that I can afford to occupy myself with his affairs again. Let him have the benefit—if benefit there be—of my coming. I would relieve you of the burden of his support, and himself of the misery of dependence."

I started with surprise. It was the first time I had ever heard the word with reference to myself, and a sense of shame, almost to sickness, came over me as I stood there.

"Jasper is my child; he is all that a son could be to his mother," cried Polly, clasping me in her arms, and kissing my forehead, and I felt as if my very heart was bursting. "Between us there is no question of burden or independence."

"We live in an age of fine sentiments and harsh actions," said the Count. "I have seen M. de Robespierre shed tears over a dead canary, and I believe that he could control his feelings admirably on the Place de Grève. Jasper, I see that we must finish this conversation when we are alone together. And now to dinner."

He assumed a half air of gaiety as he said this; but it was unavailing as a means of rallying my poor mother, whose tearful eyes and trembling lips told how sadly dispirited she felt at heart.

I had heard much from my mother about the charms of the Count's conversation, his brilliant tone, and his powers of fascination. It had been a favourite theme with her to dilate upon his wondrous agreeability, and the vast range of his acquaintance with popular events and topics. She had always spoken of him, too, as one of buoyant spirits, and even boyish light-heartedness. She had even told me that he would be my companion, like one of my own age. With what disappointment, then, did I find him the very reverse of all this! All his views of life savoured of bitterness and scorn—all his opinions were tinged with scepticism and distrust; he sneered at the great world and its vanities; but even these he seemed to hold in greater estimation than the humble tranquillity of our remote village. I have him before me this instant, as he leaned out of

the window, and looked down the valley towards the Splügen Alps. The sun was setting, and only the tops of the very highest 'glaciers were now touched with its glory; their peaks shone like burnished gold in the sea of sky, azure and cloudless. The rest of the landscape was softened down into various degrees of shade, but all sufficiently distinct to display the wild and fanciful outlines of cliff and crag, and the zigzag course by which the young Rhine forced its passage through the rocky gorge. Never had the scene looked in greater beauty—never had every effect of light and shadow been more happily distributed; and I watched him with eagerness, as he gazed out upon a picture which nothing in all Europe can surpass. His countenance for a while remained calm, cold, and unmoved; but at last he broke silence and said—

"This it was, then, that gave that dark colouring to all your letters to me, Polly; and I half forgive you as I look at it, Gloom and barbarism were never more closely united."

"Oh, Emile, you surely see something else in this grand picture?" cried she, in a deprecating voice.

"Yes," said he, slowly—"I see poverty and misery—half-fed and half-clad shepherds—figures of bandit ruggedness and savagery. I see these, and I feel that to live amongst them, even for a brief space, would be to endure a horrid nightmare."

He moved away as he spoke, and sauntered slowly out of the room, down the stairs, and into the street.

"Follow him, Jasper," cried Polly, eagerly; "he is dispirited and depressed—the journey has fatigued him, and he looks unwell. Go with him; but do not speak till he addresses you."

I did not much fancy the duty; but I obeyed without a word. He seemed to have quickened his pace as he descended; for when I reached the street, I could detect his figure at some distance off in the twilight. He walked rapidly on, and when he arrived at the bridge, he stopped, and leaning against the balustrade, looked up the valley.

"Are you weary of this, boy?" asked he, while he pointed up the glen.

I shook my head in dissent.

"Not tired of it!" he exclaimed—"not heart-sick of a life of dreary monotony, without ambition, without an object? When I was scarcely older than you I was a guard-du-corps; at eighteen I was in the household, and mixing in all the splendour and gaiety of Paris; before I was twenty I fought

the Duc de Valmy and wounded him. At the Longchamps of that same year I drove in the carriage with La Marquese de Rochvilliers, and all the world knows what success that was! Well, all these things have passed away, and now we have a republic, and the coarse pleasures and coarser tastes of the 'canaille.' Men like me are not the 'mode,' and I am too old to conform to the new school. But you are not so; you must leave this, boy—you must enter the world, and at once, too. You shall come back with me to Paris."

"And leave my mother?"

"She is not your mother; you have no claim on her as such; I am more your relative than she is, for your mother was my cousin. But we live in times when these ties are not binding. The guillotine loosens stronger bonds, and the whisper of the spy is more efficacious than the law of divorce. You must see the capital, and know what life really is. Here you will learn nothing but the antiquated prejudices of Raper, or the weak follies of—others."

He only spoke the last word after a pause of some seconds, and then moodily sank into silence.

I did not venture to utter a word, and waited patiently till he resumed, which he did by saying—

"The Countess has told you nothing of your history—nothing of your circumstances? Well, you shall hear all from me. Indeed there are facts known to me with which she is unacquainted. For the present, Jasper, I will tell you frankly that the humble pittance on which she lives is insufficient for the additional cost of your support. I can contribute nothing; I can be but a burthen myself. From herself you would never hear this; she would go on still, as she has done hitherto, struggling and pinching, battling with privations, and living that fevered life of combat that is worse than a thousand deaths. Raper, too, in his own fashion, would make sacrifices for you; but would you endure the thought of this? Does not the very notion revolt against all your feelings of honour and manly independence? Yes, boy, that honest grasp of the hand assures me that you think so! You must not, however, let it appear that I have confided this fact to you. It is a secret that she would never forgive my having divulged. The very discussion of it has cost us the widest estrangements we have ever suffered, and it would peril the continuance of our affection to speak of it."

"I will be secret," said I, firmly.

"Do so, boy; and remember that when I speak of your

accompanying me to Paris, you express your wish to see the capital and its brilliant pleasures. Show, if not weary of this dreary existence here, that you at least are not dead to all higher and nobler ambitions. Question me about the life of the great world, and in your words and questions exhibit the interest the theme suggests. I have my own plan for your advancement, of which you shall hear later."

He seemed to expect that I would show some curiosity regarding the future, but my thoughts were all too busy with the present. They were all turned to that home I was about to leave—to the fond mother I was to part from—to honest Joseph himself—my guide, my friend, and my companion; and for what? An unknown sea, upon which I was to adventure without enterprise or enthusiasm.

The Count continued to talk of Paris, and his various friends there, with whom he assured me I should be a favourite. He pictured the life of the great city in all its brightest colours. He mentioned the names of many who had entered it as unknown and friendless as myself, and yet, in a few years, had won their way up to high distinction. There was a vagueness in all this which did not satisfy me; but I was too deeply occupied with other thoughts to question or cavil at what he said.

When we went back to supper, Raper was there to pay his respects to the Count. De Gabriac received his respectful compliments coldly and haughtily: he even interrupted the little address poor Joseph had so carefully studied and committed to memory, by asking if he still continued to bewilder his faculties with Greek particles and obsolete dialects; and then, without waiting for his reply, he seated himself at the table, and arranged his napkin.

"Master Joseph," said he, half sarcastically, "the world has been pleased to outlive these follies: they have come to the wise resolve that, when languages are dead, they ought to be buried; and they have little sympathy with those who wish to resuscitate and disinter them."

"It is but an abuse of terms to call them dead, Count," replied Joseph. "Truth, in whatever tongue it be syllabled, does not die. Fidelity to nature in our age will be acknowledged as correct in centuries after."

"Our own time gives us as good models, and with less trouble to look for them," said the Count, flippantly. "Your dreamy book-worm is too prone to delve in the earth and not to coin the ore that he has discovered. Take Jasper there; you have

taught him diligently and patiently: I'll be sworn you have neglected him in nothing, so far as your own knowledge went; and yet, before he shall have been three months in Paris, he will look upon you, his master, as an infant. The interval between you will be wide as the broad Atlantic; and the obstacles and crosses, to overcome which will be with him the work of a second, would be to you difficulties insurmountable."

"To Paris! Jasper go to Paris!" exclaimed my mother, as she grew deadly pale.

"Jasper leave us!" cried Raper, in a tone of terror.

"And why not?" replied the Count. "Is it here you would have him waste the best years of youth? Is it in the wild barbarism of this dreary valley that he will catch glimpses of the prizes for which men struggle and contend? The boy himself has higher and nobler instincts; he feels that this is but the sluggish existence of a mere peasant; and that yonder is the tournament where knights are jousting."

"And you wish to leave us, Jasper?" cried my mother, with a quivering lip, and a terrible expression of anxiety in her features.

"To forsake your home!" muttered Raper.

"Ask himself; let him be as frank with you as he was half an hour ago with me, and you will know the truth."

"Oh! Jasper, speak!—leave me not in this dreadful suspense!" cried my mother: "for in all my troubles I never pictured to my mind this calamity."

"No, no!" said Raper; "the boy's nature has no duplicity—he never thought of this!"

"Ask him, I say," cried the Count; "ask him if he wish not to accompany me to Paris."

I could bear no longer the power of the gaze that I felt was fixed upon me, but, falling at her feet, I hid my face in her lap, and cried bitterly. My heart was actually bursting with the fulness of sorrow, and I sobbed myself to sleep, still weeping through my dreams, and shedding hot tears as I slumbered.

My dream is more graven on my memory than the events which followed my awaking. I could recount the strange and incoherent fancies which chased each other through my brain on that night, and yet not tell the actual occurrences of the following day.

I do remember something of sitting beside my mother, with my hand locked in hers, and feeling the wet cheek that from time to time was pressed against my own—of the soft hand, as

it parted the hair upon my forehead, and the burning kiss that seemed to sear it. Passages of intense emotion—how caused I know not—are graven in my mind; memories of a grief that seemed to wrench the heart with present suffering, and cast shadows of darkest meaning on the future. Oh, no! no!—the sorrows—if they be indeed sorrows—of childhood are not short-lived; they mould the affections, and dispose them in a fashion that endures for many a year to come.

While I recall to mind these afflictions of the actual events of my last hours at Reichenau, I can relate but the very slightest traits. I do remember poor Raper storing my little portmanteau with some of the last few volumes that remained to him of his little store of books—of my mother showing me a secret pocket of the trunk, not to be opened, save when some emergency or difficulty had presented itself—of my astonishment at the number of things provided for my use, and the appliances of comfort and convenience which were placed at my disposal—and then, more forcibly than all else, of the contemptuous scorn with which the Count surveyed the preparation, and asked “if my wardrobe contained nothing better than these rags?”

Of the last sad moment of parting—the agony of my mother’s grief as she clasped me in her arms, till I was torn away by force, and with my swimming faculties I thought to have seen her fall fainting to the ground—of these I will not speak, for I dare not, even now!



CHAPTER XXVI.

PARIS IN —'95.

Our journey was a dreary and wearisome one. The diligence travelled slowly, and as the weather was dull and rainy, the road presented nothing of interest, at least of interest sufficient to combat the grief that still oppressed me. We were upwards of a week travelling before we reached Paris, which I own presented a very different aspect from what my ardent imagination had depicted. The narrow streets were scarcely lighted—it was night—the houses seemed poor, and mean, and dilapidated; the inhabitants rude-looking and ill-dressed. The women especially were ill-favoured, and with an air of savage daring and effrontery I had never seen before. Gangs of both sexes patrolled the streets, shouting in wild chorus some popular chant of the time; and as the diligence did not venture to pierce these crowds, we were frequently delayed in our progress to the "bureau," which was held in the Rue Didier of the Battignolles, for it was in that unfashionable quarter in which my first impressions of the capital were conceived.

"Remember, boy, I am no longer a Count here," said my companion, as we got out of the conveyance. "I am the citizen Gabriac, and be careful that you never forget it. Take that portmanteau on your shoulder, and follow me!"

We treaded a vast number of streets and alleys, all alike wretched and gloomy, till we entered a little "Place," which formed a "cul de sac" at the end of a narrow lane, and was lighted by a single lantern suspended from a pole in the centre. This was called the Place de Treize, in memory, as I afterwards learned, of thirteen assassins, who had once lived there, and been for years the terror of the capital. It was now but scantily tenanted, none of the rooms on the ground-floor being inhabited at all; and in some instances an entire house having but one or two occupants. The superstitious terrors that were rife about it (and there were abundance of ghost stories in vogue) could scarcely account for this desertion; for assuredly the fears of a spiritual world could not have proved formidable to the class who frequented it but an impression had got abroad, that it

was a favourite resort of the spies of the police, who often tracked the victims to this quarter; or at least here obtained information of their whereabouts. Plague itself would have been a preferable reputation to such a report, and accordingly few but the very poorest and most destitute would accept the shelter of this ill-omened spot.

A single light, twinkling like a faint star, showed through the gloom as we entered, where some watcher yet sat, but all the rest of the "Place" was in darkness. Gabriac threw some light gravel at the window, which was immediately opened, and a head, enveloped in a kerchief by way of night-cap, appeared.

"It is I, Pierre," cried he; "come down and unbar the door!"

"Ma Foi," said the other, "that is unnecessary. The commissaire broke it down yesterday, searching for 'Torchon,' and the last fragment cooked my dinner to-day."

"And Torchon; did they catch him?"

"No, he escaped; but only to reach the Pont Neuf, where he threw himself over the ballustrade into the river."

"And was drowned?"

"Doubtless, he was."

"I scarcely regret him," said Gabriac.

"And I not at all," replied the other. "Good night;" and with this he closed the window, leaving us to find our way as best we could.

I followed Gabriac, as he slowly groped his way up the stairs and reached a door on the third story, of which he produced the key. He struck a light as he passed in, and lighted a small lamp, by which I was enabled to see the details of a chamber poorer and more miserable than anything I had ever conceived. A board laid upon two chairs served for a table; and some wood-shavings, partially covered by a blanket, formed a bed; a couple of earthenware pipkins comprised the cooking utensils, and a leaden basin supplied the provisions for the toilet.

"Lie down there, and take a sleep, Jasper, for I have no supper for you," said Gabriac; but his voice had a touch of compassionate gentleness in it which I heard for the first time.

"And you, sir," said I, "have you no bed?"

"I have no need of one. I have occupation that will not admit of sleep," said he. "And now, boy, once for all, never question me, nor ask the reasons of what may seem strange or odd to you. Your own faculties must explain whatever requires explaining—or else you must remain in ignorance;" and with these words he passed into an inner chamber, from which he

speedily issued forth to descend the stairs into the street, leaving me alone to my slumbers. And they were heavy and dreamless ones, for I was thoroughly wearied and worn out by the road.

I was still asleep, and so soundly that I resisted all efforts to awake me till a strong shake effectually succeeded, and, on looking up, I saw Gabriac standing by my side.

"Get up, boy, and dress. These are your clothes," said he, pointing to a uniform of dark green and black, with a sword-belt of black leather, from which hung a short, broad-bladed weapon. The dress was without any richness, still a becoming one, and I put it on without reluctance.

"Am I to be a soldier, then?" asked I, in half shame at disobeying his injunction of the night before.

"All Paris, all France, is arrayed at one side or the other just now, Jasper," said he, as he busied himself in the preparation of our coffee. "The men who have ruled the nation by the guillotine have exhausted its patience at last. A spirit, if not of resistance, of at least self-defence, has arisen, and the little that remains of birth and blood amongst us has associated with the remnant of property to crush the hell-hounds that live by carnage. One of these bands is called the battalion of 'La Jeunesse Dorée,' and into this I have obtained your admission. Meanwhile, you will be attached to the staff of General Danitan, who will employ you in the 'secretariat' of his command. Remember, boy, your tale is, you are the son of parents that have died on the scaffold. You are the nephew of Emile de Gabriac, brother of Jules Louis de Gabriac, your father; whom you cannot remember. Your life in Switzerland you can speak of with safety. You will not talk of these matters save to the General, and to him only if questioned about them."

"But is this disguise necessary, sir? May I not assume the name I have a right to, and accept the fate that would follow it?"

"The guillotine," added he, sarcastically. "Are you so ignorant, child, as not to know that England and France are at war, and that your nationality would be your condemnation? Follow my guidance or your own," said he, sternly, "but do not seek to weld the counsels together."

"But may I not know in what service I am enrolled?"

"Later on, when you can understand it," was the cold reply.

"I am not so ignorant," said I, taking courage, "as not to be aware of what has happened of late years in France. I know that the king has been executed."

"Murdered!—martyred!" broke in Gabriac.

"And monarchy abolished."

"Suspended—interrupted," added he, in the same voice.

"But I will not discuss these matters with you. When you have eaten your breakfast, take that letter to the address in the Rue Lepelletier, see the General, and speak with him. As you go along the streets, you will not fail to meet many of those to whom your duty will at some later period place you in opposition. If they by look, by dress, by bearing and manner captivate your imagination, and seduce your allegiance to their ranks, tear off your colours, then, and join them, boy; the choice is open to you. My charge is then ended; we are not, nor ever can be, aught to each other again."

I saw that he would not be questioned by me, and forbearing at once from the risk of offending him, I ate my meal in silence.

"I am ready now, sir," said I, standing up in front of him.

He wheeled me round by the arm to look at me in my new dress. He adjusted my belt, and arranged my sword-knot more becomingly, muttering to himself a few words of approval at my appearance, and then said aloud,—

"Salute all whom you see in this uniform boy, and bear yourself haughtily as you pass the 'canaille.' Remember that between you and them must be the struggle at last, and show that you do not blink it."

He patted me good-naturedly on the shoulder, as he said this, and, with the word "Go," half-pushed me from the room.

I soon found myself in the open air, and having inquired my way to the Rue Lepelletier, walked rapidly along, endeavouring, as best I might, to disguise the astonishment I felt at so many new and wonderful objects. As I emerged from the meaner quarter of the Battignolles, the streets grew finer and more spacious and the dress of the people and their appearance generally improved also. Still there was none of that splendour of equipage of which I had heard so much. The carriages were few, and neither rich nor well appointed. The horses were poor-looking, and seemed all over-worked and exhausted. The same tired and worn-out air pervaded the people too. They all looked as though fatigue and excitement had finally conquered them, and that they were no longer capable of endurance. At the bakers' shops that I passed, great crowds were assembled, waiting for the distribution of bread which the Government each morning doled out to the population. I

watched these, and saw, to my amazement, that the ration was a small piece of black and coarse bread, weighing two ounces, and for this many were content to wait patiently the entire day. In my curiosity to see this, I had approached an old man, of a strong, athletic appearance, who, leaning on his staff, made no effort to pierce the crowd, but waited calmly till his name was called aloud, and even then received his pittance as it was passed to him from hand to hand. There was something of dignity in the way he subdued every trace of that anxious impatience so perceptible around him, and I drew nigh to speak to him, with a sense of respect.

"Is that meant for a day's subsistence?" asked I.

He stared at me calmly for a few seconds, but made no reply.

"I asked the question," began I, with an attempt to apologize, when he interrupted me thus:—

"Are you one of the *Troupe Dorée*, and ask this? Is it from you, who live in fine houses, and eat sumptuously, that comes the inquiry, how men like me exist?"

"I am newly come to Paris; I am only a few hours here."

"See here, comrades," cried the old man, in a loud and ringing voice to the crowd, "mark what the '*Sections*' are doing; drafting the peasants from the Provinces, dressing them in their livery, and arming them to slaughter us. Starvation marches too slowly for the wishes of these aristocrats!"

"Down with the '*aristos*,' down with the '*Troupe*!'" broke in one wild yell from the multitude, who turned at once towards me with looks of menace.

"Ay," continued the old man, waving his hand to maintain silence, "he dared to taunt me with the pittance we receive, and to scoff at our mendicancy!"

"Down with him! down with him!" cried the crowd; but interposing his staff like a barrier against the mob, the old fellow said,—

"Spare him, comrades; he is, as you see, only a boy; let him live to be wiser and better. Come, lad, break that sword upon your knee; tear off that green cockade, and go back to your village again!"

I stepped back, and drawing my sword, motioned to those in front to give way.

"I'll cut down the first that opposes me!" cried I, with a waive of the steel round my head, and at the same instant I dashed forward.



"I'll cut down the first that opposes me!"

The mass fell back and left me a free passage, while a chorus of the wildest yells and screams burst around and about me. Mad with the excitement of the moment, I shook my sword at them as I went, in defiance, and even laughed my scorn of their cowardice. My triumph was brief; a stunning blow on the back of the head sent me reeling forwards, and at the same instant the ranks of the mob closed in, and hurling me to the ground, trampled and jumped upon me. Stunned, but not unconscious, I could perceive that a battle was waged over me, in which my own fate was forgotten, for the multitude passed and repassed my body without inflicting other injury than their foot-treads. Even this was brief, too, and I was speedily raised from the earth, and saw myself in the arms of two young men in uniform like my own. One of them was bleeding from a wound in the temple, but seemed only to think of me and my injuries. We were soon joined by several others of the troop, who having returned from a pursuit of the mob, now pressed around me with kindest questions and inquiries. My name, whence I came, and how long I had been in Paris, were all asked of me in a breath; while others, more considerate still, sought to ascertain if I had been wounded in the late scuffle. Except in some bruises, and even those not severe, I had suffered nothing, and when my clothes were brushed, and shako re-adjusted, and a new cockade affixed to it, I was as well as ever. From the kind attentions we met with in the shops, and the sympathy which the better-dressed people displayed towards us, I soon gathered that the conflict was indeed one between two classes of the population, and that the Troupe were the champions of property.

"Show him the Rue Lepelletier, Guillaume," said an officer to one of the youths; and a boy somewhat older than myself now undertook to be my guide.

I had some difficulty in answering his questions, as to the names and the number of my family who were guillotined, and when and where the execution had occurred; but I was spared any excessive strain on my imagination by the palpable indifference my companion exhibited to a theme now monstrously tiresome. He, however, was communicative enough on the subject of the Troupe and their duties, which he told me were daily becoming more onerous. The Government, harassed by the opposition of the National Guards and the Jeunesse Dorée together, had resorted to the terrible expedient of releasing above a thousand prisoners from the galleys, and these, he assured me, were now on their way to Paris, to be armed and

formed into a regiment. Though he told this with a natural horror, he still spoke of his own party with every confidence. They comprised, he said, the courage, the property, and the loyalty of France. The whole nation looked to them as the last stay and succour, and felt that the hope of the country was in their keeping.

I asked him what was the number now enrolled in the Troupe? and, to my astonishment, he could not tell me. In fact, he owned that many had of late assumed the uniform as spies, and General Danitan had resolved that each volunteer should present himself to him for acceptance before receiving any charge, or being appointed to any guard.

I had not time for further questioning when we arrived at the hotel of the General, when my companion having given me full directions for my guidance, shook my hand cordially, and departed.

As I ascended the stairs I overtook an elderly gentleman in a grey military frock, who was slowly making his way upwards by the aid of the balustrade.

"Give me your arm, lad," said he, "for this stair seems to grow steeper every day. Thanks; now I shall get on better. What has torn your coat-sleeve?"

I told him in a few words what had just occurred in the streets, and he listened to me with a degree of interest that somewhat surprised me.

"Come along, my lad. Let General Danitan hear this from your own lips;" and with an agility that I could not have believed him capable of, he hurried up the stairs, and crossing a kind of gallery, crowded with officers of different grades, he entered a chamber where two persons in military undress were writing.

"Can I see the General, François?" said he, abruptly.

The officer thus addressed coolly replied that he believed not, and went on with his writing as before.

"But I have something important to say to him—my business is of consequence," said he.

"As it always is," muttered the other, in a tone of sarcasm, that fortunately was only overheard by myself.

"You will announce me, then, François?" continued he.

"My orders are not to admit any one, Captain."

"They were never meant to include me, sir—of that I'm positive," said the old man; "and if you will not announce me, I will enter without it;" and, half dragging me by the arm, he moved forward, opened the door, and passed into an inner room.

General Danitan, a small, dark-eyed severe-looking man, was standing with his back to the fire, and in the act of dictating to a secretary, as we entered. An expression of angry impatience at our unauthorized appearance was the only return he vouchsafed to our salute; and he continued his dictation, as before.

"Don't interrupt me, sir," said he, hastily, as the old Captain made an effort to address him. "Don't interrupt me, sir. Which difficulties," continued he, as he took up the thread of his dictation—"which difficulties are considerably increased by the obtrusive habit of tendering advice by persons in whose judgment I place no reliance, and whose conduct, when they leave me, is open to the suspicion of being prejudicial to the public service. Amongst such offenders the chief is a retired captain of the 8th regiment of Chasseurs, called Hugues Le Bart.—"

"Why, General, it is of me—me myself—you are speaking!" broke in the Captain.

"An officer," continued the other, perfectly heedless of the interruption, "into whose past services I would strenuously recommend some inquiry; since, neither from the information which has reached me with regard to his habits, nor from the characters of his intimates, am I disposed to regard him as well affected to the Government, or in other respects trustworthy. How do you do, Captain? who is our young friend here?" continued he, with a smile and a bow towards us.

"In what way am I to understand this, General? Is it meant for a piece of coarse pleasantry——"

"For nothing of the kind, sir," interrupted the other, sternly. "That you have been a witness to the words of a confidential communication is entirely attributable to yourself; and I have only to hope you will respect the confidence of which an accident has made you a participator. Meanwhile, I desire to be alone."

The manner in which these words were uttered was too decisive for hesitation, and the old man bowed submissively and withdrew. As I was about to follow him the General called out,—

"Stay—a word with you. Are you the Captain's protégé, boy?"

I told him that our first meeting only dated a few moments back and how it had occurred.

"Then you are not of the 'Troupe?' You have never worn the uniform till this morning?" said he, somewhat severely.

I bowed assent.

He turned hastily about at the moment, and said something to his secretary in a low voice, of which I just could catch the concluding words, which were far from flattering to the corps in whose livery I was dressed.

"Well, boy, go back and take off those clothes," said he, sternly; "resume your trade or occupation, whatever it be, and leave politics and state affairs to those who can understand them. Tell your father——"

"I have none, sir."

"Your mother, then, or your friends, I care not what they be. What letter is that you are crumpling in your fingers?" broke he in, suddenly.

"To General Danitan, sir."

"Give it me," said he, half-snatching it from me.

He tore it hastily open and read it, occasionally looking from the paper to myself, as he went on. He then leaned over the table where the secretary sat, and showed him the letter. They conversed eagerly for some seconds together, and then the General said,—

"Your friends have recommended you for a post in the 'chancellerie militaire;' is that your liking, lad?"

"I should be proud to think myself capable of doing anything for my own support," was my answer.

"D'Artans, see to him; let him be enrolled as a supernumerary, and lodged with the others. This gentlemen will instruct you in your duty," added he to me; while, with a slight nod towards the door, he motioned me to withdraw.

I retired at once to the antechamber, where I sat down to think over my future prospects, and canvass in my mind my strange situation.

Troops of officers in full and half-dress, orderlies with despatches, aides-de-camp in hot haste, came and went through that room for hours; and yet there I sat unnoticed and unrecognized by any, till I began to feel in my isolation a sense of desertion and loneliness I had never known before.

It was already evening when D'Artans joined me, and taking my arm familiarly within his own said,—

"Come along, Jasper, and let us dine together."

The sound of my own name so overcame me, that I could scarcely restrain my tears as I heard it. It was a memory of home and the past, too touching to be resisted!

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BATTLE OF THE SECTIONS.

THERE could not have been a readier process of disenchantment to me, as to all my boyish ambitions and hopes, than the routine of my daily life at this period. I was lodged, with some fourteen others, in an old Pension in the Rue des Augustines, adjoining the bureau in which we were employed. We repaired each morning at an early hour to our office, and never left it till late in the evening—sometimes, indeed, to a late hour of the night. Neither the manners nor the habits of my companions inspired me with a desire to cultivate their intimacy. They were evidently of a low class by birth; and with tastes even inferior to their position. They construed my estrangement to the true cause, and did not scruple to show that I was not a favourite amongst them. In ridicule of my seeming pretensions, they called me the “Count,” and never passed me without an obsequious mock salutation, which I returned as punctiliously, and not appearing to detect its sarcasm. With experience of life and mankind, isolation is probably a condition not devoid of certain pleasures—it may minister to a kind of proud self-reliance and independence of spirit; but to a boy it is one of unalloyed misery. There is no heavier infliction than the want of that free expansion of the heart that comes of early friendship. Youth is essentially the season of confidence: and to restrain its warm impulses, and dam up the flow of its affections, is to destroy its best and highest charm. I will not venture to assert that I was not myself much to blame for the seclusion in which I lived. I probably resented too forcibly what I need scarcely have noticed, and felt too acutely what, at worst, were but trifling annoyances. Some of this may be attributed to me constitutionally, but even more to the nature of my bringing up. All my boyish impulses were stimulated by affection; whatever I attempted was in a wish to gain praise; all my ambitions were to be loved the more. In my loneliness I sought out M. de Gabriac, but in vain. His lodging on the Place was now occupied by another, who could give no tidings of him whatever. I wrote to my mother and to Raper, but without receiving a

reply. I then tried M. Jost, and received a few lines to say that my friends had taken their departure some months before from Reichenau, but in what direction he knew not. This letter put the finishing stroke to my sense of utter desolation. It was indeed not possible to conceive a more forlorn and friendless being than I now was. By my superior in the office I was held in little favour or esteem. I was indeed, in many respects, less capable than many of my colleagues, and it is not impossible that my apparent pride may have contrasted with my real deficiency. All these causes pressed upon me together, and made up a series of annoyances which came very little short of downright unhappiness.

My circumstances, too, were not calculated to dispel these gloomy tendencies. Beyond our maintenance, which was of the very humblest kind, our whole pay was five hundred francs yearly, and as this was paid in paper money, it reduced the actual amount more than one-fourth. By the very strictest economy, and by many an act of self-denial, I was enabled to keep myself out of debt, but it was an existence of continued watchfulness and care, and in which not even the very cheapest pleasure found a place. My colleagues, indeed, talked of cafés, restaurants, excursions, and theatres, as of matters of daily habit, but in what way they compassed such enjoyments I knew not. The very freedom of their language on these themes cast an air of contemptuous mockery over my humbler existence that assuredly did not diminish its bitterness.

My inexpertness frequently compelled me to remain in the office long after the rest. The task allotted to me was often of greater length, and many times have I passed a considerable part of the night at my desk. On these occasions, when I had finished, my head was too much excited for sleep, and I then sat up and read—usually one of the volumes Raper had given me—till morning. These were my happiest hours; but even they were alloyed by the weariness of an exhausted and tired intellect. So thoroughly apart from the world did I live—so completely did I hug my solitary existence at this period, that of the events happening around I positively knew nothing. With cafés and their company, or with newspapers, I had no intercourse; and although at moments some street encounter, some collision between the mob and the National Guard, would excite my curiosity, I never felt interest enough to inquire the cause, or care for the consequences.

Such incidents grew day by day more common; firing was frequently heard at night in different parts of the capital, and

it was no rare occurrence to see carts with wounded men conveyed to hospital through the streets, at early morning. That the inhabitants were fully alive to the vicinity of some peril was plain to see. At the slightest sign of tumult, at the least warning, shops were closed and shutters fastened, doors strongly barricaded, and armed figures seen cautiously peering from casements and parapets. At one time a single horseman at full gallop would give the signal for these precautions; at others, they seemed the result of some instinctive apprehension of danger, so rapidly and so silently were they effected. Amid all these portents, the daily life of Paris went on as before. It was just as we hear tell of in the countries where earthquakes are frequent, and where in almost every century some terrible convulsion has laid a whole city in ruins, the inhabitants acquire a strange indifference to peril till the very instant of its presence, and learn to forget calamities when once they have passed.

As for myself, so accustomed had I become to these shocks of peril, that I no longer went to the window when the uproar beneath betokened a conflict, nor even cared to see which side were conquerors in the affray. It was in a mood of this acquired indifference that I sat reading one evening in my office long after the others had taken their departure; twice or thrice had loud and prolonged shouts from the street disturbed me, but without exciting in me sufficient of curiosity to see what was going forward, when at last, hearing the rumbling sound of artillery trains as they moved past, I arose and went to the window. To my surprise, the streets were densely crowded, an enormous concourse filling them, and only leaving a narrow lane through which the waggons could pass. That it was no mere procession was clear enough, for the gunners carried their matches lighted, and there was that in the stern air of the soldiery that bespoke service. They wheeled past the church of St. Roch, and entered a small street off the Rue St. Honoré, called La Dauphine, where, no sooner had they passed in, than the sappers commenced tearing up the pavement in front of the guns, and speedily formed a trench of about five feet in depth before them. While this was doing, some mounted dragoons gave orders to the people to disperse, and directed them to move away by the side streets: an order so promptly obeyed, that in a few minutes the long line of the Rue St. Honore was totally deserted. From the position at La Dauphine to the Tuileries I could perceive that a line of communication was kept open, and orderlies passed at a gallop frequently from one side to the other. Another circumstance, too, struck me: the windows,

instead of being crowded by numbers of eager spectators, were strongly shuttered and barred, and when that was impossible, the glass frames were withdrawn, and bed mattresses and tables placed in the spaces. Along the parapets, also, vast crowds of armed men were to be seen, and the tower and battlements of St. Roch were studded over with soldiers of the National Guard, all armed and in readiness. From the glances of the artillerymen beneath to the groups above, it required no great prescience to detect that they stood opposed to each other as enemies.

It was a calm mellow evening of the late autumn. The air was perfectly still, and now the silence was unbroken on all sides, save when, from a distance, the quick tramp of cavalry might be momentarily heard, as if in the act of forcing back a crowd, and then a faint shout would follow, whose accents might mean triumph or defiance.

I was already beginning to weary of expectancy, when I perceived, from the movement on the house-tops and the church tower, that something was going forward within the view of those stationed there. I had not to look long for the cause, for suddenly the harsh sharp beat of a drum was heard, and immediately after the head of a column wheeled from one of the side streets into the Rue St. Honoré. There were grenadiers of the National Guard, and a fine body of men they seemed, as they marched proudly forward, till they came to a halt before the steps of St. Roch. Handkerchiefs were waved in salutation to them from windows and housetops; and cheering followed them as they went. A single figure at the entrance of La Dauphine stood observing them with his glass; he was an artillery officer, and took a long and leisurely survey of the troops, and then directed his eyes towards the crowded roofs, which he swept hastily with his telescope. This done he sauntered carelessly back and disappeared.

The grenadiers were soon followed by the line, and now, as far as my eye could carry, I beheld vast masses of soldiery who filled the street in its entire breath. Up to this all was preparation. Not a sight, or sound, or gesture indicated actual conflict, and the whole might have meant a mere demonstration on either side, when suddenly there burst forth a crash like the most terrific thunder. It made the very street tremble, and the houses seemed to shake as the air vibrated around them; a long volley of musketry succeeded, and then there arose a din of artillery, shouts, and small arms; that made up the infernal chaos. This came from the quarter of the river, and in that

direction every eye was turned. I hurried to the back of the house in the hope of being able to see something, but the windows only looked into a court surrounded by tall buildings. Ere I returned to my place the conflict had already begun. The troops of the National Guard advanced, firing by sections, and evidently bent on forcing their passage up the street; and their firing seemed as if meant in declaration of their intentions rather than aggressively, since no enemy appeared in front; when, no sooner had the leading files reached the opening of La Dauphine, than the artillery opened with grape and round shot. The distance could scarcely have exceeded forty yards, and the withering fire tore through the dense ranks, forming deep lanes of death! Smoke soon enveloped the masses, and it was only at intervals I could catch sight of the moving body, which still moved up! There was something indescribably dreadful in seeing the steady march of men to inevitable destruction; and even their slow pace (for such was it of necessity, from the numbers of dead and dying that encumbered their path) increased the horror of the spectacle. A deadly musketry poured down from the tower of St. Roch upon the gunners.

The whole fire from housetops and windows was directed at them; but, fast as they fell, others took their places, and the roll of the artillery never slackened nor ceased for an instant. The shot rattled like hail on the walls of the houses, or crashed through them with clattering destruction. Wild and demoniac yells, death-shouts, and cries of triumph, mingled with the terrible uproar. Above all, however, roared the dread artillery, in one unbroken thunder. At last the column seemed to waver—the leading files fell back—a moment's hesitation ensued—a fresh discharge of grape, at less than pistol range, tore through them; and now the word was given to retire. Shouts and cries poured from the housetops and parapets. Were they of encouragement or derision?—who can tell? The street now presented the horrid spectacle of indiscriminate carnage—the guns were wheeled forward as the troops retired, cavalry charging on the broken masses while the guns were reloading—the cavalcade of death rode past at a walk, the gunners firing steadily on, till the word was given to cease. The smoke cleared lazily away at last, and now no living thing was seen to stir in front: the long line of the Rue St. Honoré presented nothing but the bodies of the dead. The housetops and parapets, too, were speedily deserted; for the houses were now forced by the infantry of the line, who, at every moment, appeared at the windows, and waved their

shakos in token of victory. As I looked, a crash recalled my attention behind me; and now the door of the bureau was in ruins, and four soldiers, with their bayonets at the charge, dashed forward. On seeing me alone and unarmed, they only laughed, and passed on to the upper story.

"Are you in charge here?" asked a young corporal of me.

"I belong to the bureau," said I, in reply.

"Place your books and papers under lock and key, then," said he, "and make your way to head quarters."

"Where?"

"At the Tuileries. There goes the Commander-in-Chief," added he, mechanically saluting, as a staff of officers rode by beneath.

"Who is that pale man in front, with the long hair?" asked I.

"General Bonaparte," was the answer, "and few can handle artillery like him."



CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN EPISODE OF MY LIFE.

If I could have turned my thoughts from my own desolate condition, the aspect of Paris on the morning after the battle might well have engaged my attention. The very streets presented a scene such as never can be forgotten! The Government had adventured on the bold experiment of employing the masses to control the few, and the fruits of this dangerous alliance might be seen in the various groups that passed along. Officials wearing their badges of duty, officers in full uniform, walked arm in arm with leaders of the popular party; men high in the state talked familiarly in the midst of little groups of working men; parties of the popular force, rudely armed, ill-dressed, and disorderly, presented arms as some officer of rank rode by. All attested the existence of that strange compact by which the nation was again to be subjugated, and terror made the active principle of a Government. The terrific songs of the bloody days of the Revolution were once more heard, and the cruel

denunciations of the mob again rang aloud in the open streets! I heard and saw all these like one in a dream, as, with my portfolio of office-papers under my arm, I held my way to the Tuileries; nor was it till I had reached the wooden stockade in front of that palace that I became collected enough to ask myself, whither I was going, and for what?

The machinery of government to which I belonged was annihilated and destroyed; they who had guided and controlled it were gone; and there I stood alone, friendless, and without a home in that vast city, not knowing which way to turn me. I wandered into the garden of the Tuileries, and sat down upon a bench in one of the less frequented alleys. The cries and shouts of the populace rung faintly in my ear, and the noises of the city came dulled and indistinct by distance. From the quiet habits of my simple life, I had scarcely learned anything whatever of Paris. My acquaintances were limited to the few I had seen at the bureau, and these I only met when there. My means were too scanty to admit of even the cheapest pleasures; and up to this my existence had been one uniform but contented poverty. Even this humble provision was now withdrawn from me. What was I to do? Was there a career by which I could earn my bread? I knew of none save daily labour with my hands, and where to seek for even this I did not know! In my little lodging behind the bureau I possessed a few articles of clothes and some books: these, if sold, would support me for a week or two, and then—ay, then! But who can tell? thought I: a day has marred—who knows but another day may make my fortune?

It was night when I turned homeward. To my surprise the stair was not lit up as usual, and it was only after repeated knockings that the door was opened to me, and old Lizette, my landlady's servant, with a voice broken by sobs, bade me pass in quietly, and to make no noise. I asked eagerly if any misfortune had occurred, and heard that Monsieur Bernois, my landlord, had been mortally wounded in the affray of the night before, and was then lying at the point of death.

"Is it the surgeon, Lizette?" cried Marguerite, a little girl of about fourteen, and whose gentle "Good-day" had been the only thing like welcome I had ever heard during my stay there; "is it the surgeon?"

"Helas, no! mademoiselle, it is the lodger!"

I had not even a name for them! I was simply the occupant of a solitary chamber, for whom none cared or thought; and yet at that instant I felt my isolation the greatest blessing of heaven,

and would not have exchanged my desolate condition for all the ties of family!

"Oh, sir," cried Marguerite, "have pity on us, and come to papa. He is bleeding on the bed here, and none of us know how to aid him!"

"But I am no less ignorant, mademoiselle," said I; "would that I could be of any use to you!"

"Oh come," cried she; "come, and heaven may direct you how to succour us, for we are utterly deserted!"

Scarcely knowing what I did I followed the little girl into a darkened room, where the long-drawn breathings of the wounded man were the only sounds. By the dim half light, I could see a figure seated at the foot of the bed. It was my hostess, pale, stern-looking, and collected; there she sat, gazing at the gasping object before her, with a terrible composure.

"Mamma, it is monsieur; monsieur who lives here, is come to see papa," whispered Marguerite, timidly.

The mother nodded her head, as if to imply that she had heard her, but never spoke. I drew nigh the bed, the rather to show my sympathy with the sorrow, than that I could be of any service; and the dying man's eyes met mine. Glazed and filmy as they seemed at first, I fancied they grew bright and lustrous as he continued to stare. Such at all events was their fascination, that I could not look away from them, and so I stood under that steadfast gaze, forgetful even of the state of him who bestowed it. At last the orbs slowly turned, at first towards where his wife sat, then to Marguerite as she knelt by the bedside, and then back again to me, with an expression that needed no words to convey. I took the clammy hand in my own, and felt the fingers give a faint pressure. I squeezed them gently, and saw that his lips parted: they moved, too, as though with an effort to speak, but without avail. The attempt had evidently cost him a severe pang, for his features were convulsed for a few seconds, at the end of which he gently drew me a little towards him, and with a sigh so faint as to be scarcely heard, uttered the words "Pauvre femme!"

It was not until some minutes had elapsed that I saw he had ceased to breathe, for his eye seemed to stare with meaning on me, and his countenance remained unchanged. At length, however, I became conscious that the struggle was over, and his spirit had passed away for ever. The stillness of the room was terrible, for not a stir broke it; and I knelt down beside Marguerite to pray.

"Here is the surgeon, mademoiselle," said Lizette, hurriedly,

and an old man drew nigh the bed, and touched the wrist of the dead man.

"Ma foi!" said he, "this is the fourth time I have been sent for to-day on a like errand;" and so saying, he tapped me on the shoulder, and motioned me to follow him.

I obeyed at once.

"Are you his son?" asked he briefly.

"No," I replied.

"His nephew?—his clerk, then?"

"Neither; I am a lodger here, and do not even claim acquaintance with the family."

"No matter," resumed he, drily, "you will do as well as another; give me pen and paper."

I took some from an open portfolio on the table, and laid it before him, and he wrote rapidly a few lines in a straggling hand——

"The citizen Louis Bernois, age ——; domiciled, Rue Neuve de Viardot, No. 318, Avocat,"—"we may call him avocat, though he was only a writer," said he, looking up,—“wounded fatally in the lungs and heart, and attended till his death, on this morning, by the doctor Joseph Caillot, surgeon and licentiate. The above verified by me.” “Sign here,” added he, handing me the pen, “and put your quality. Say, ‘Friend of the family.’”

"But I never knew them; I have only lodged in the house for some months back."

"What signifies that? It is a mere form for the authorities, to whom his death must be reported, or his family exposed to trouble and annoyance. I will take it to the bureau myself."

I signed my name, therefore, as he directed me, and sealed the "act" with a seal I found on the table. The doctor pocketed the paper, and withdrew, not even bestowing on me a good-bye as he left the room.

Lizette came to me for instructions as to what was to be done. Madame had never recovered consciousness from the very first moment of the misfortune; mademoiselle was too young and too inexperienced to be consulted on the occasion. The family, too, had only been a few months in Paris, and had no acquaintance save with the tradespeople they dealt with.

I asked the name of the *avocat* for whom he usually transcribed the deeds and papers, and learned that it was a certain Monsieur le Monnier, a lawyer of high standing at the bar of Paris, and who lived in the Rue Quincampoix! With what a

strange sensation I heard the name of that street, which was the same that Herr Robert spoke of as inhabited by his father in the days of his greatest prosperity! The thought merely shot through my head rapidly, for other and far more pressing considerations demanded all my attention. I resolved at once to call on Monsieur le Monnier and ask his advice and guidance in the difficult position I then found myself. Dressing myself with all the care my scanty wardrobe permitted, I set out for the Rue Quincampoix, and soon found the house, which was a large and spacious though somewhat sombre-looking "hotel," with a half-effaced shield over the doorway. The porter inquired if I came on business; and on my saying "Yes," informed me that I must call on the following morning, from eleven to two o'clock—that the "Batonnier," for such was his rank, did not transact affairs in the evening.

I argued and pressed my suit with all zeal, but it was only when I produced a piece of two francs, that he consented to present my card, on which I had written a few lines to explain the urgent cause of my visit.

After a long and most impatient waiting, a servant came to say that monsieur would receive me, and I followed him up a spacious but dimly lighted stair, and across a long dreary gallery, where a single lamp shone, into a small chamber, fitted up like a study. Here, although it was autumn, the "Batonnier" was seated beside a brisk fire, enjoying his coffee. He was a small man, with a massive, well-shaped head, covered with a profusion of snow-white hair, which he wore in such careless fashion as to make his head appear even much larger than it was: his features were pleasing, and his eyes were singularly soft and gentle-looking. With a voice of peculiar sweetness, and in a low tone, he welcomed me and desired me to be seated. This done, he begged me to state the object of my visit.

In the very fewest words I could relate it, I mentioned the sad circumstances about which I came; told my own difficulty in the matter, and asked for advice.

"At any other moment," said he, when I concluded, "your task would be an easy one. You could report the event to the 'commissaire' of the 'Quarter,' state what you know, and withdraw from the affair altogether. Now, however, the troubles in which we live excite suspicions in every mind. Your name will be associated with the opinions for which this poor man has given his life. The authorities will be on your track at every moment, and every act of your life watched and reported. With whom were you acquainted in Paris?"

"With none."

He stared with some surprise; and I told him briefly the circumstances of my own situation.

"A strange story, indeed!" said he, taking up my card from the chimney-piece; "and your name, for I cannot decipher it here, is——"

"Carew—Jasper Carew."

"That name is Irish, if I mistake not," said he; "at least I remember, some twenty years ago, we had here a distinguished stranger who came from Ireland, and was called Carew. He was the fashionable celebrity of a very famous period."

"He was my father, sir."

The old lawyer bowed and smiled; but though the gesture was eminently polite, the shrewd twinkle of his eyes bespoke incredulity. I saw this, and said at once,—

"I have many letters of his, dated from the 'Place Vendome,' No. 13, where he lived."

"Indeed!" cried he in astonishment. "You possess these at present?"

"Some few I have with me; others, a large number, are in the keeping of my friends, as well as notes and papers in the hand of the late Duc D'Orleans, with whom my father appeared to live on considerable intimacy."

"That I can vouch for myself," said the avocat, hastily; then suddenly correcting himself, added—"Perhaps you would give me a sight of some of these documents. I do not ask from any impertinent curiosity, but with the conviction that I can be of some service to you."

I readily promised to do so, and the following day was named for the purpose.

"Now, for the present case," said he. "I know nothing of Monsieur Bernois, beyond what a client of mine from the Auvergnat told me. He was the son of a poor farmer near Linange, who studied the law at Paris, went back to his native village, and married, and, after some years of failure at home, came here to make his fortune. I employed him partly from motives of charity, for he was irregular in his habits of work, and seemed overcome by a depression that rendered him often incapable of all exertion. Make what arrangements you think suitable for his burial, and then induce his poor widow and daughter to return home. Call upon me for any expenses that may be needed, and say that I will send one of my clerks to make an inventory of his effects, and draw up the 'procès' the law requires."

There was a mingled kindness and commonplace in the way he spoke this that left me in doubt which of the two frames of mind predominated in his nature. At all events, I had good reason to be satisfied with my reception; and resisting his invitation to stay to supper, I hastened back to the Rue de Viardot.

The poor widow still remained in the state of stupor in which I first saw her; but Marguerite's grief had taken a more violent form, and the terrible shock had brought on brain fever—at least so Lizette pronounced it. My sad duties were thus multiplied by the cares of the sick-room, for Lizette threw all upon me, and would do nothing without my guidance and advice.

By great exertions, and by working all night through, I reduced the affairs of the family to a condition of order, and when Monsieur le Monnier's clerk appeared in the morning, I had already compiled the inventory, and drawn up the "acte de décès," as it is called, for the authorities.

By searching amongst papers I also found the address of the widow's father, who lived in the village of "Linange," and to him I wrote a few lines, acquainting him with what had occurred, and asking his counsel with regard to the family. Though Lizette had accompanied them from their native village to Paris, she was greatly indisposed to afford any information as to their circumstances or condition in life, and seemed only eager to complete all the formalities of the law, and quit the capital. I certainly did not impose any unfair burden upon her incommunicative disposition. I asked a few questions—none that were not in a measure indispensable.

I suppose my reserve in this wise impressed her favourably, for she grew gradually more and more open, dropping hints of sad circumstances and calamities, in a way that seemed half to invite inquiry on my part. I was resolved, however, not to make any advances, and left her entirely to her own choice as to what revelations she might make me. I have no doubt that had my object been to gratify my curiosity, I could not have hit upon any surer means of success.

We laid the remains of poor Bernois in a little graveyard outside the Porte St. Denis; Lizette and myself the only mourners that followed the bier! As I slowly ascended the stairs towards my room, I said,—

"Come to me this evening, Lizette, and say if I can be of any further service to you, since I mean to leave Paris to-morrow."

"To leave Paris!" cried she; *Grand Dieu!*—why, and for where?"

"For Switzerland," replied I. "My friends there have not answered my letters for some time back, and I have determined to set off and see them."

"But why not write again?—think of what a journey it is!"

"I have written till I have lost all hope. I must satisfy myself by going in person."

"But you will not leave us helpless—friendless, as we are!" cried she.

Never till that moment had it occurred to me that my assistance could avail to any one, or that there existed one in the world humble enough to be benefited by my guidance. The appeal, however, gave me a self-confidence and an energy which I had not felt before, and I listened to the explanations of the old servant with every desire to aid her.

She judged rightly enough, that as soon as removal were possible, the safest course would be for the widow and her daughter to return to their village.

"I know," added she, "that this is not to be effected without difficulty. 'Madame' will oppose it to the last; and it may be that nothing short of force will accomplish it."

I asked the reason of this repugnance, and she only gave me a vague unmeaning answer. It was clear to me there was a mystery in the affair; and though piqued that I was not entrusted with the secret, I felt that to withdraw my aid from them on such grounds would be both selfish and unworthy.

"I will consult M. le Monnier," said I, at last; "he shall decide what is best to be done," and at once set out for the Rue Quincampoix.

The old lawyer received me blandly as before, and gave me a few lines for his family physician, who would see the widow and Marguerite, and pronounce his opinion on their fitness for removal. Le Monnier seemed pleased with the interest I manifested for these poor friendless people, and readily promised to aid me in their behalf.

The doctor, too, was no less benevolently disposed, and came at once with me to the house. His visit was a long one; so long that more than once I asked Lizette if she were quite certain that he had not taken his departure. At length, however, he came forth, and leading me into a room, closed the door behind us with all the air of great secrecy.

"There is some sad story," said he, "here, of which we have not the clue. This is a serious affair."

"How do you mean?" asked I.

"I mean that the state in which I find this woman is not attributable to the recent shock. It is not her husband's death has caused these symptoms."

"And what are they? Do they threaten her life?"

"No; certainly not; she may live for years."

"What then? They will cause great suffering, perhaps?"

"Not even that; but worse than that. It is her intelligence is lost; she has been stunned by some terrible shock of calamity, and her mind is gone in all likelihood for ever!"

To my eager questioning he replied by explaining that these cases were far less hopeful than others in which more palpable symptoms manifested themselves; that they were of all others the least susceptible of treatment.

"When we say," continued he, "that 'time' is the best physician for them, we declare in one word our own ignorance of the malady; and yet such is the simple truth! A course of years may restore her to reason—there is no other remedy."

"And her daughter?"

"That is not a case for apprehension—it is a common fever, the result of a nervous impression; a few days will bring her completely about."

I mentioned to the doctor my belief that Lizette could probably impart some explanation of the mystery; but the old woman was proof against all cross-examination, and professed to know nothing that could account for her mistress's condition. The question was now how to act in this emergency? and the doctor pronounced that there was no other course than to obtain her admission into some *maison de santé*: if her fortune permitted, to one of the better class: if not, there were various humbler houses, where the patients were treated well and skillfully. As a preliminary step, however, he requested me to write again to her family, to state the opinion he had come to, and ask for their advice.

"It is little other than a form to do so," added he, "for we live in times when the state is everything, family nothing. If I report this case to-morrow to the Bureau of Health of the 'Quarter,' a commission will assemble, examine, and decide upon it at once. The measures adopted will be as imperatively executed as though the law were in pursuit of a criminal; and though this be so, and we cannot help it, it will have the semblance of consideration for the feelings of her relatives, if we consult them."

He left me, therefore, to make this sad communication, and

promised to repeat his visit on the following day. By way of extorting some confession from old Lizette, I told her the course the doctor had resolved upon; but far from exhibiting any repugnance to it, she briefly said, "it was all for the best."

It was not till after repeated efforts I could satisfy myself with the terms of my letter. The occasion itself was a difficult one; but my sense of a mystery of which I knew nothing, added immensely to the embarrassment. I was, moreover, addressing persons I had never seen, and of whose very condition in life I was ignorant. This in itself was a circumstance that required consideration. I thought I would read my letter to Lizette, and sent for her to hear it. She listened attentively as I read it, but made no other remark than, "Yes; that will be sufficient."

On the fourth day after I dispatched this, came a letter in reply, the handwriting, style, and appearance of which were all superior to what I had expected. It was from an unmarried sister of Madame Bernois, who signed herself "Ursule," that being the name by which she had "professed" formerly in a convent, destroyed in the early days of the Revolution. The writer, after expressing deep gratitude for the part I had taken, went on to speak of the subject of my communication. Her father's infirmities had rendered him bedridden, and so utterly incapable of affording any help or even counsel, that she hesitated about informing him of the terrible calamity that had befallen them. She perfectly concurred in the advice given by the doctor, if "only, that it saved her poor sister from a return to home now associated with nothing but sorrow, and where, of course, her chances of recovery would be diminished." These strange expressions puzzled me much, and led me at first to suppose that Ursule believed I knew more of her sister's story than I really was acquainted with; but as I read them again, I saw that they might possibly only have reference to her father's sad condition. Margot, for so she called her niece, "would, of course, come back to them;" and she charged me to dispatch her under Lizette's care, by the diligence, as soon as she was judged sufficiently well to encounter the fatigue of the journey. With regard to any property or effects belonging to them, she left all implicitly at my own discretion, believing, as she said, the same kindness that had hitherto guided me would also here suggest what was best for the interests of the widow and her child.

Some days of unremitting exertion succeeded the receipt of this letter, for there was no end to the formalities requisite before I could obtain admission for the widow into a small

maison de santé, at Mont Martre. It was, indeed, a moment at which the authorities were overwhelmed with business, and many of the public functionaries were new to office, and totally ignorant of its details. The public, too, were under the influence of a terror that seemed to paralyze all powers of reason. In my frequent visits to the commissaire of the "Quarter," when waiting for hours long in his antechamber, I had abundant opportunity to measure the extent of the fear that then dominated the mind of the capital, since every trifling incident evidenced and betrayed it.

Ladies of rank and condition would come, earnestly entreating that they might obtain leave to attend the sick in the hospitals, and nurse the "dear brothers" who had fallen in the cause of liberty. Others, of equal station, requested that materials might be distributed to them, to knit stockings for the soldiers of the republic, regretting their poverty at not being able to supply them from their own resources. Shopkeepers besought the authorities that their taxes might be doubled or even trebled; and some professed to hope that the maladies which incapacitated them from military service, might be compensated by works of charity and benevolence. There was an abject meanness in the character of these petitions too revolting to endure the thought of. The nation seemed prostrated by its terror, and degraded to the very deepest abyss of shame and self-contempt. The horrible scenes of blood through which they had passed, might, indeed, excuse much, but there were proofs of national cowardice at this juncture, such as scarcely any suffering could justify or palliate.

For these considerations I had but a passing thought. My whole attention was devoted to the little circle of cares and sorrows around me; and, in addition to other calamities, poor old Lizette, my aid and help throughout all difficulties, was seized with a violent fever, and obliged to be conveyed to hospital. I do not believe that anything can sustain mere bodily strength more powerfully than the sense of doing a benevolent action. Fatigue, weariness, exhaustion, sickness itself, can be combated by this one stimulant. For myself, I can aver that I scarcely ate or slept during the ten days that these events were happening. Never had any incident of my own life so much engrossed me as the care of these unhappy people; and when once or twice Le Monnier adverted to my own story, I always replied that, for the moment, I had no thoughts, nor hopes, nor fears, save for the widow and her orphan daughter.

The old lawyer's benevolence enabled me to meet all the expenses which from day to day were incurred. He supplied me with means to pay the charges of the *maison de santé*, and the fees to the physicians, and enabled me to procure some articles of mourning for poor "Margot," who had now sufficiently recovered from her illness to comprehend her bereavement, and the desolate condition in which she was placed. It was, indeed, a sad lesson to teach the poor child; nor did I, in my own forlorn and isolated state, know what consolations to offer, nor what hopes to set before her. I could but tell her that I too was an orphan, friendless—nay, far more so than herself; that for me the world had neither home nor country; and yet that each day glimpses of bright hopes gleamed upon me, kind words and acts met me, and that as I lived I learned to feel that there was a brotherhood in humanity, and that amidst all the adverse incidents of fortune, warm hearts and generous natures were scattered about to sustain the drooping courage of those deserted as we were.

"And be assured, Margot," said I, "the time will come yet when you and I will recall these dark hours with a sense of not unpleasant sorrow, to think how patiently we bore our ills, how submissively and how trustfully. Then shall we teach others, young as we are now, that even the humblest has a duty to do in this life, and that he who would do it well must bring to his task a stout heart and a steady will, and with these there are no failures."

I do not think that Margot derived much hope from all my efforts at consolation, but she certainly felt a strong interest in the similarity of our fortunes. Again and again did she question me, if I had seen, and could remember, my mother, and asked me a thousand questions about the dear friend whom I had ever called by that name. We talked of no other theme than this, and our isolation served to link us together, as that of two beings deserted by all, and only cared for by each other. There was a character of depression about her that seemed to come of a life of habitual gloom; the ordinary state of her mind was sad, and yet her dark, lustrous eyes could flash with sudden brilliancy; her deep colour knew how to heighten; and I have seen her lip tremble with proud emotion at moments of excitement.

When sufficiently recovered to bear the journey, Le Monnier counselled me to convey her to her friends; and I yielded—shall I own it?—reluctantly: for of all the world, Margot was now the only one to whom I could speak, as youth loves to speak, of

all my hopes and my dreads, my ambitions and my aspirings. So long as my duty each day revolved round her, I had no time to think of my own fate, save as a thing to weave fancies about, to speculate on a brilliant future, and imagine incidents and events at random. With what enthusiasm was I often carried away by these self-wrought fancies!—with what a sense of triumph have I seen Margot, forgetting for the instant the sad realities of her lot, listen breathlessly to me as I told of my ambitious plans! To her I was already a hero; and oh! the glorious fascination with which one first feels the thought that another's heart has learned to beat highly for our successes, and to throb with eagerness for our triumph! I was but a boy, Margot was a child; and of love, as poets describe it, there was none between us. Still, in my devotion, there was nothing I would not have dared to please her—nothing I would not have braved to make her think more highly of me. It was self-love—but self-love ennobled by generous wishes and high ambitions. I strove to be worthy of her affection, that so I might be capable of doing more still to deserve it!

Is it to be wondered at if I dreaded to break this spell, and to awaken from a trance of such fascination? But there was no alternative; Margot must go, and I must address myself to the stern business of life, for I had my bread to earn! How ardently I wished it was to my dear mother's arms that I should consign her, that her home could be that same humble home I had just quitted, and that poor Joseph could have been her teacher and her guide. Alas! I no longer knew in what part of the world to look for them, and I could only speak of these things as I spoke of the dream-wrought fancies that my hopes called up!

It was on a bright November morning, clear, sharp, and frosty, that we left Paris in the diligence for Lyons. Mons. le Monnier had accompanied us himself to the bureau, and given the *conducteur* directions to show us every attention in his power. Three days' and nights' travelling brought us to Valence, where poor Margot, completely worn out, was obliged to repose for some hours, during which time I strolled through the town, to see its churches and other remarkable monuments. It was the hour of the *table-d'hôte* as I regained the inn, and the hostess advised that we should dine at the public table, as less expensive than in private. I remember well with what mingled bashfulness and pride I entered the room, with Margot holding my hand. The company was a numerous one, comprising, besides many of the townspeople, several officers of the

garrison, all of whom stared with undisguised astonishment at the aspect of two travellers of our youth and palpable inexperience, while the contrast between the deep mourning of her dress and the gay colours of mine at once showed that we were not brother and sister. To my respectful salute on entering, few deigned to reply; my companion's beauty had arrested every attention, and all eyes were turned towards her, as she took her place at table.

For the incident which succeeded, I must devote a short chapter.



CHAPTER XXIX.

THE INN AT VALENCE.

PRECEDED by the waiter, who was about to point out the places destined for us at the table, I walked up the room, holding Margot by the hand. The strangers made way for us as we went, not with any of the deferential politeness so usual in France, but in a spirit of insolent astonishment at our presence there. Such, at least, was the impression their behaviour produced on me; and I was only anxious that it should not be so felt by my companion.

As I drew back my chair, to seat myself at her side, I felt a hand placed on my arm. I turned, and saw an officer, a man of about six or seven-and-twenty, with a bushy red beard and moustache, who said:—

“This place is mine, citizen; you must go seek for one elsewhere.”

I appealed to the waiter, who merely shrugged his shoulders, and muttered something unintelligible; to which I replied by asking him to show me another place, while I assisted Margot to rise.

“La petite shall stay where she is,” broke in the officer, bluntly, as he brushed in front of me; and an approving laugh from his comrades at once revealed to me the full meaning of the impertinence.

"This young lady is under my care, sir," said I, calmly, "and needs no protection from you."

"The young lady!" cried he, with a burst of coarse laughter at the words, "knows better how to choose! Is it not so, citizen? I look a more responsible guardian than that thin stripling with the pale cheek."

"I appeal to this company, to the superiors of this officer—if there be such present—to know are these the habits of this place, or have I been singled out specially for this insolence?"

"Insolence! insolence!" repeated every voice around me, in accents of astonishment and reprobation; while suddenly above the clamour, a deep voice said,—

"Lieutenant Carrier, take a place at the foot of the table!"

"Oui, mon Colonel!" was the reply; and he who accosted me so rudely now moved away, and I seated myself at Margot's side.

I believe that, during this brief scene, the poor girl knew little or nothing of what was going forward. The fatigue, from which she had not yet recovered—the novelty of the place in which she found herself—the confusion natural to mixing with a strange company—all contributed to engage her attention, and occupy her thoughts. It was only by the deadly paleness of my features that she at last guessed that something had gone wrong. I tried by every means in my power to reassure her. I affected, as well as I might, to seem easy and unconcerned. I even essayed, by way of showing my self-possession, to engage the person next me in conversation; but a cold stare of surprise arrested the attempt, and I sat abashed and ashamed at the rebuke.

I do not know if, in my whole life, I ever passed an hour of greater misery than the time of that dinner. Had I been there alone, I could have confronted manfully whatever threatened me, but the thought of involving Margot in any scene of shame—of exposing her to the rude insolence of which I saw myself the mark—was insupportably painful. I felt, besides, that I had a character to support in her eyes; nor could I yet divine what adverse turn affairs might take. If I looked down the table, it was to meet, on every side, glances of haughty or insolent meaning. It was easy to perceive, too, that the whole company was under the impression of the disagreeable incident which had occurred before sitting down to table, and which none believed was yet concluded. Instead of the noisy chit-chat, so usual in such places, there was either a perfect silence,

or the low murmuring sounds of a conversation maintained in whispers. At last the colonel and those around him stood up, and gathered in a group at one of the windows. The civilians of the party broke into knots, conversed for a few seconds, and separated; and, taking Margot's hand, I arose, and prepared to withdraw. As I was leaving the room, the officer who first accosted me whispered in my ear,—

"You will come back again, I suppose?"

"Certainly, if you want me," said I.

He nodded, and I passed out.

"I am glad it is over," said Margot, pressing my hand; "that dinner was a tiresome affair!"

"So it was," said I; "and I am well pleased that it is finished. I'll go down now and look after this caleche they promised me they should have ready for us by this time;" and with this excuse I quitted her, and hastened down stairs again.

I was just making for the door of the *salle-à-manger* when the hostess overtook me.

"A word with you, monsieur—one word!" cried she.

"At another moment, madam," said I, trying to pass on. "I am greatly pressed for time just now."

"It is exactly for that reason I must speak with you," said she, firmly; and at the same instant she seized my arm, and drew me into a room, of which she closed the door at once. "I suspect the object you have in view, young man," said she boldly, to me. "You are eager for a quarrel. The waiters have told me all that has occurred at table; and I can guess what is likely to follow. But surely it is not for one in *her* position that you will risk your life, or rather sell it—for Carrier would surely kill you!"

"In *her* position!" said I. "What do you mean? You can, not dare to throw an imputation on one who is little more than a child!"

"True; but a child of shame and infamy," said she, sternly.

"It is a falsehood—a damnable falsehood!" cried I. "I knew both her parents: her father died almost in my arms."

"It is as likely that you never saw her father in your life," rejoined she, calmly. "I see that you know little of her history; but she comes from the village of Linange, and we Auvergnats are well acquainted with her."

"Yes, Linange is her native village—that is true," cried I, in a vague terror of some dreadful tidings. "Tell me, I beseech you, whatever you know of her story."

"It is soon told, though the tale be sad enough," said she,

after a pause. "Her mother was a Mademoiselle Nipernois. She called herself De Nipernois, and not without reason; for the family had been of rank, and were Grand Seigneurs once on a time. Her father had, however, fallen into poverty, and for a livelihood was obliged to become a *pharmacien* in the little village of Linange, every house of which had once belonged to his family. They said he was a great chemist, which he had become for his own amusement in his prosperous days; and fortunately he could now practise the art for his support. At all events, the Blues wrecked his chateau, burned his books, melted down his plate, and left him penniless; so that he was fain to seek shelter amidst what once he would have styled his own 'vilains;' but who were now, thanks to the glorious fruits of the Revolution, his equals. That was not to be his only humiliation, however. A young noble, that was betrothed to his eldest daughter, Hortense, and was to have married her just before 'the troubles,' joined the mildest party of the anarchists, and actually assisted at the sack of the chateau. Some said that he had had a dreadful altercation and quarrel with the father—some averred that he had met a contemptuous refusal from the daughter: either, or both, may have been the truth. What is certain is, that he exacted a vengeance far heavier than any injury he could have received. On the pretence of seeking for some concealed royalist, a party of the Blues, headed by the Count, in disguise, broke into the old man's house in the village, and carried off his eldest daughter—indeed the only child that remained to him, for his second girl was an admitted nun of the Chaise Dieu, which had hitherto escaped pillage and destruction. From that hour no trace of her could ever be obtained; but on the same day twelvemonths, as morning broke, she was found on the steps of her father's door, with a baby in her arms. I have heard, for I have often spoken with those who discovered her, that her reason was shattered, and her memory so completely lost, that she did not know her own name. An unbroken apathy settled down on her from that time. She cared for nothing, not even her child; and though Margot was very beautiful, and so engaging that all the neighbours loved and caressed her, her mother saw her without the slightest touch of interest or affection! After the lapse of thirteen, or almost fourteen years, a young man of the village, named Bernois, who had just returned from studying at Paris, proposed to marry her. Some are of opinion that he had never heard her real history, nor knew of the relationship between her and Margot—others think differently, and say that he was aware of all, and

acquitted her of everything save the misfortune that had befallen her. By what persuasion she was induced to accept him I never knew, but she did so, and accompanied him to Paris; for strangely enough, they who had hitherto treated her with all the respect due to undeserved calamity, no sooner beheld her as a married woman, and lifted into a position of equality with them, than they vented a hundred calumnies upon her, and affected to think her beneath their condition. This persecution it was which drove Bernois to seek his fortune in Paris, where he has now met his death! The *conducteur* who arrived here last night told who had accompanied him from Paris, and the officers, who are all familiar with her mother's story, were curious to see the girl. They induced me to advise you to dine at the public table, and unhappily I yielded to their solicitations, not suspecting what might ensue. The only reparation in my power now is to tell you this whole story; for of course, having heard it, you will perceive how fruitless and vain it would be for you to oppose yourself to the entire force of public opinion."

"And is it the custom of the world to insult those situated as she is?" asked I, in a voice that plainly showed I put the question in all sincerity and ignorance.

"It is assuredly the habit of young men, and more especially soldiers, to treat them with less deference than the daughters of honest women; and you must have seen but little of life, or you had not asked the question."

I sat silent for some seconds, revolving in my mind the sad history I had just listened to, and comparing the events with what I had myself witnessed of her who had been their victim. The hostess cut short my musing by saying,—

"There, I see the caleche has just driven into the *cour*: lose no time in getting away at once. The officers are now at coffee in the garden, and you can escape unobserved."

So engrossed was I by thoughts of Margot, and the necessity of shielding her from insult, that I forgot totally all about myself, and what bore reference to my own feelings exclusively. I therefore hastened from the room to make the preparations for our departure. While I was thus engaged and occupied with seeing our luggage tied on, a young officer, touching his cap in salute, asked if I was not the stranger who dined that day at the table-d'hôte, in company with a young lady; and, on my replying "Yes," added,—

"Are you not aware, sir, that we have been expecting the pleasure of your society in the garden for some time back?"

I answered that I was totally ignorant of their polite inten-

tions respecting me ; that I was anxious to reach my destination, still twelve leagues away, and unable to accept of their hospitality.

He gave a faint smile as I said this, and then rejoined,—

“But you can surely spare a few moments to make your apologies to our colonel?”

“They must be, then, of the very briefest,” said I. “Will you kindly guide me to where he is?”

With a slight bow he walked on, and, crossing the court-yard, entered a garden ; on traversing a considerable portion of which, we came out upon a kind of terrace, where a large party of officers were seated around a table, smoking and drinking coffee. Some, too, were engaged playing at chess or dominoes, some reading, and some apparently asleep ; but, however occupied, no sooner had I made my appearance than all, forgetting everything but my presence, turned their eyes upon me.

“The citizen,” cried out my guide, as we came up, “the citizen tells me that he was quite unconscious of our polite intentions in his behalf ; and I can fully believe him, for he was on the eve of departure when I caught him !”

“What does he think a French soldier is made of ?” shouted out the colonel, with a blow of his closed fist on the table. “He dares to make use of an expression insulting to every officer of my regiment, and then says he is unaware of any claim we have upon him !”

A new light broke upon me at these words, and, for a moment, the sense of shame at my mistake nearly overcame me. I rallied, however, enough to say,—

“It is quite as you say, Monsieur le Colonel ; I was really unaware that you or your officers had any claim upon me ! I had been the subject of a rudeness to-day, at the table-d'hôte, which, in my little knowledge of the world, I attributed to the underbred habits of a coarse school of manners. I now perceive that I was too lenient in my judgment.”

“Are we to listen to any more of this, messieurs ?” said the colonel rising ; “or is it from me that chastisement is to come ?”

“No ; I have the right, I claim the place, I am the youngest subaltern, I am the ‘cadet of the corps,’ ” cried half-a-dozen in a breath ; but Carrier’s voice overbore the others, saying,—

“Comrades, you seem to forget that this is my quarrel : I will not yield my right to any one !”

“Yes, yes,” exclaimed several voices together ; “Carrier says truly. The affair is his. We fight with the sabre, citizen, in the Chasseurs-à-Cheval. Is the weapon to your liking ?”

"One arm is the same to me as another," replied I; and unfortunately this was too literally the case, since I was equally inexpert in all!

"You can claim the pistol, if you wish it," whispered an old captain, with a snow-white moustache. "The challenged chooses his weapons."

"The sabre be it, then," exclaimed Carrier, catching me up at once.

"Not if the citizen prefer the pistol," interposed the captain.

"He has already made his choice: he said all weapons were alike to him."

"Quite true," said I; "I did say so!"

"The greater fool you, then!" murmured the captain between his teeth. "You might just as well have given yourself your chance. Carrier won't be so generous to you!"

"Will you be my second?" asked I of him.

"*Ma foi!* if you wish it," said he, with a shrug of the shoulders and a glance of such tender pity, that could not be mistaken. "Let us follow them!"

And so saying, we strolled leisurely on after the others, who, now passing through a small wicket, entered a little wood that adjoined the garden. A few minutes more brought us to an open space, which I rightly guessed had been often before the scene of similar affairs.

I had never witnessed a duel in my life. I knew nothing of the formalities which were observed in its arrangement; and the questions which I asked the captain so palpably betrayed my ignorance, that he stared at me with mute astonishment.

"Have you any friends, boy," asked he, after a pause, "to whom I can write for you?"

"Not one," said I.

"All the better!" rejoined he, tersely.

I nodded an assent; and from that moment we understood each other perfectly. No lengthy explanation could more plainly have declared that he thought I was doomed, and that I concurred in the foreboding.

"My sabre will be too heavy for you, boy," said he; "I'll see and borrow a lighter one from one of my comrades. Chasteler, will you lend me yours?"

"*Parbleu!* that will I not. I'd never wear it again if used in such a quarrel."

"Right, Chasteler," cried another; "I hope there is only one amongst us could forget an insult offered to the whole regiment."

"I wore my epaulette when you were in the cradle, Lieutenant Hautmain," said the old captain; "so don't pretend to teach me the feelings that become a soldier. There, boy," he added, drawing his sabre as he spoke, "take mine."

By this time my antagonist had divested himself of coat and neckcloth; and stood, with open shirt-breast, and the sleeve of his sword-arm rolled up to the shoulder, before me. He was as much an overmatch for me in strength and vigour as in skill; and I felt an acute sense of shame in pitting myself against him. As he swung his sabre jauntily to and fro, with the dexterous facility of a practised swordsman, I could read the confidence with which he entered upon the encounter.

"It is the first time you ever handled a sword, I think?" said the captain, as he assisted me off with my coat.

"The very first," said I, endeavouring, I know not how successfully, to smile.

"*Parbleu!*" cried he aloud. "This is no better than a murder! The boy knows nothing of fencing; he never had a sabre in his hands till now."

"He should have thought of that before he uttered an insult," said Carrier, placing himself *en garde*. "Come on, boy!"

The offensive look and manner in which he spoke, so carried me away, that I rushed in, and aimed a cut at his head. He parried it, and came down with a sharp stroke on my shoulder, exclaiming, "*Ça!*" as he did it. The same word followed every time that he touched me: nor did it require the easy impertinence of the glances he gave towards his comrades to show that he was merely amusing himself; as, at one moment, he covered my face with blood, and at another disarmed me by a severe wound on the wrist.

"Enough of this—too much of it!" cried the captain, as the blood streamed down my cheeks from a cut on the forehead, and almost blinded me.

"When *he* says so, it will be time to stop—not till then," said Carrier, as he gave me a sharp cut on the neck.

My rage so overpowered me at this, that I lost all control over myself; and, resolving to finish the struggle at once, I sprang at him—and, with both hands on my sword, made a cut at his head. The force was such that the blow broke down his guard, and felled him to the earth, with a tremendous wound of the scalp; and there he lay, stunned and senseless, while, scarcely more conscious, I stood over him. Passion had up to

that sustained me ; but loss of blood and exhaustion now succeeded together, and I reeled back and fainted.

Though terribly backed and sorely treated, none of my wounds were dangerous ; and after being bandaged, and stitched, and plastered in various ways, I was able—or, at least, insisted that I was able—to pursue my journey that evening ; and away we drove, with no very grateful recollection of Valence, except, indeed, towards the old captain, who saw us off, and took a most affectionate leave of us at parting.

Margot had heard from the hostess enough to show her that I had been her champion and defender, though in what cause she could not possibly divine. Whatever her anxiety to learn the facts, she never put a single question to me as we went along, her sole care being to do whatever might assuage my pain and alleviate my suffering. Thanks to this kindness, and the cool air of an autumn night, I travelled with comparatively little uneasiness ; and as day was breaking we entered the quiet street of the little village.

“There—yonder is our house—the porch with the jasmine over it. Oh ! how the rose-trees have grown !”

Such was Margot’s exclamation, as we drew up at the door.



CHAPTER XXX.

LINANGE.

I DO not know how far other men's experiences will corroborate the opinion; but for myself I will say, that more than once has it occurred to me, to remark that some of the most monotonous periods of my life have been those to which I often look back with the greatest pleasure, and love to think over as amongst the happiest. The time I passed at Linange was one of these. Nothing could be more simple—nothing more uniform than our life there. The unhappy circumstance to which I have already alluded had completely estranged from the family any of those with whom they might have associated. From some, the former rank and condition of the house separated them; from others they were removed by political bias; and to the rest, the event of which I have already spoken was the barrier. Thus, then, was our life passed, within the limits of an humble household of four persons. The old Marquis—for such was he still styled by us—was a fine specimen of the class to which he belonged; proud and stately in manner, but courteous almost to humility in his bearing to one beneath his roof. Unbroken by misfortune, he trusted that—although not in his time—the world would yet return to its ancient course, and the good king “have his own again.” His personal calamities sat lightly on him, or, rather, he bore them bravely. If he spoke of his former state and position, it was in regret for those faithful followers he could no longer support; not for himself, whose wants were few, and whose habits demanded no luxuries. In the calling that he practised for his maintenance, he saw rather an occasion for pride than humiliation. There was but one topic from which he shrunk back, nor could all his courage enable him to approach that. When I first saw him, it was after a severe attack brought on by the dreadful tidings from Paris; and yet his composure seemed to me almost bordering on indifference, and I half revolted against the calm elegance of a good breeding that seemed above the reach of all feeling. Ursule was a “nun,” and whether the walls around her were those of

a cloister or a cottage, her heart was inclosed within the observances of the convent. She rose hours before day-break, to pass her time in prayer and solitude. She fasted, and toiled, and observed penances, exactly as if beneath the rule of the Superior. She had been singularly handsome, and there was still a character of beauty in her features, to which her devotional life imparted an expression of sublimity such as I have never seen even in "a Raphael." Suffering and sorrow seemed so blended with hopefulness—present agony so tinged with a glorious future—that, to me at least, she appeared almost angelic.

As for "Margot," child as she was, the whole care of the household devolved upon her. The humblest *menage* is not without its duties, and to these she addressed herself at once. It was on the day after my arrival, and while just meditating a return to Paris, that symptoms of fever first showed themselves, and a severe shivering, followed by intense headache, showed me that I was not to escape the consequences of my unhappy encounter. Ursule, whose experience in hospital life had been considerable, was the first to see the mischief that threatened, and at once persuaded me to submit to treatment. The old Marquis was soon at my bed-side, but as quickly did he perceive that the case was beyond his skill. The surgeon of the village was now sent for; he bled me largely, dressed my wounds, administered some cooling drink, and then left me to that terrible interval which precedes mania, and when the enfeebled intellect struggles for mastery against the force of wandering faculties.

In my wild fancies, all the incidents of my early days, the little adventures of boyhood, my mountain ramble, and my life in Paris, came back, and I talked with intense eagerness to those around me of them all. Short intervals of consciousness, like gleams of sunlight in a lowering sky, would break through these, and then I saw beside the bed the kind faces, and heard the gentle accents, of my friends. "Ursule" and "Margot" scarcely ever left me. In the dark hours of the long night, if a weary sigh escaped me, one of them was sure to be near to ask if I was in pain, or if I needed anything. How often have I turned away from these gentle questionings to hide my face within my hands, and cry, not in sorrow, but in a thankful outpouring of emotion, that I, the poor, unfriended, uncared-for orphan, should be thus watched, and tended, and loved!

It was not till after a lapse of weeks that I was pronounced out of danger, nor even till long after that, that I could

arise from my bed. Shall I ever forget the strange confusion of ideas that beset me, as I first found myself alone one morning in the little garden, scarcely knowing if I was still dreaming, or if all was reality around me! Where was I? how came I there? were questions that I could not follow to a solution. Some resemblance in the scenery with the country around Reichenau, assisted the mystification, and from the entanglement of my thoughts no effort could rescue me. As one by one, memories of the past came up, there came with them the sad reflection of my own lonely, isolated condition in life. The humblest had a home—had those around them to whose love and affection they could lay claim as from blood and kindred—who bore the same name, were supported by the same hopes, cheered by the same joys, and sorrowed for the same sufferings! It was true that no affection a sister could bestow could exceed that I had met with where I was. There was not a kindness of which I had not been the object. Was I, could I, be ungrateful for these? Far from it!—my melancholy lay in the thought, that these were the very evidences of my own forlorn lot, and that compassion and pity were the sentiments that prompted them in my behalf.

I knew, besides, that in my long illness I must have proved a grievous burthen to those whose own circumstances were straitened to the utmost limit of narrow fortune. I saw about me comforts, even luxuries, that must have cost many a privation to acquire. I felt that, in succouring me, they had imposed upon themselves the weight of many a future want. These were afflicting considerations, nor could all my ingenuity discover one resource against them. I was still too weak to walk—my limbs tottered under me as I went. Perhaps it were better it had been so, since I really believe if I had strength sufficient for the effort, notwithstanding all the shame that might attach to my ingratitude, I should have fled from the house that moment, never to return! It was in the abandonment of grief arising from these thoughts that "Ursule" discovered me. With what tenderness did she rally my drooping spirits! how gently did she chide my faintheartedness!

"You must rise above these things, Jasper," said she to me. "You must learn to see that the small ills of life are difficult to be borne just because they suggest no high purpose."

And from this she went on to tell me of the noble devotion of the missionary—the splendid enthusiasm that elevated men above every thought of peril, and taught them to court danger and confront suffering. How mean and sordid did she represent

every other ambition in comparison with this! How ignoble was the soldier's heroism when placed beside the martyrdom of the priest! With consummate art she displayed before my boyish fancy all that was attractive, all that was picturesque, in the missionary's life. To glowing descriptions of scenery and savage life succeeded touching episodes of deep interest and passages of tenderest emotions, the power of the Church—whether as consoler or comforter, as healing the sick or supporting the weak-hearted—being never forgotten. If she saw that my mind dwelt with pleasure on pictures of splendour, she lingered on scenes of greatness and royal power, when priests associated with monarchs as their guides and counsellors. If, at another moment, the romance seemed to engage my attention, she narrated incidents of the most affecting kind. At these moments, it was strange to mark how the cold and almost stern reserve of the cloister seemed lost in the glowing enthusiasm of the devotee. It was not the nun, broken down by fasting, wasted by penance, and subdued by prayer; but the almost inspired daughter of the Church, glorying and exulting in its triumph. She gave me books to read—lives of saints and martyrs, of devoted missionaries and pious fathers. If, in some instances the sufferings they endured seemed more than mere humanity could support, the triumphant joy of their victories appeared to partake of a celestial brilliancy. Day by day—hour by hour, did she pursue the theme, till the subject, like a river fed by a thousand rills, overflowed all else in my mind, and left no room for aught but itself.

It was not difficult for her to show that the frightful condition of France at the period—its lawless confiscations, its pillage, and its bloodshed—all dated from the extinction of the Church. The task was an easy one to contrast past peace and happiness with present anarchy and suffering. I reflected long and deeply on the subject. If doubts assailed me, I came to her to solve them; if difficulties embarrassed me, I asked her to explain them. I applied the question to the circumstances of my own position in life, and began to believe that it was exactly the career to suit me. I eagerly inquired, next, how the fitting education might be obtained; and learned that, since the destruction of the religious societies of France and the Low Countries, many had emigrated to Spain and Italy, and some to England. Sister "Ursule" was in correspondence with more than one of these, and promised to obtain all the information I sought for—meanwhile, she besought me to devote my whole mind and thoughts to these sacred subjects, withdraw-

ing, so far as I might, all my desires and ambition from the world.

Margot, I am obliged to own, contributed but little to aid my pious purpose—her gay and joyous nature had no sympathy with asceticism and restraint. The poets and dramatists, whose works she read in secret, inspired very different thoughts from the subject of my studies; her childish buoyancy could not endure the weight of that gloom which a life of denial imposes; and, whenever we were alone together, she rallied me on my newly-assumed seriousness, as on a costume which I would soon discover to be insufferable.

I dwell on these things, trifling as they are, because they convey the curious conflict which my mind sustained at this time, and the struggle that went on within me between the tendencies natural to my age, and the impulses that grew out of a sudden enthusiasm. Perhaps I might not care to recall them, if it was not that they remind me of Margot, such as I then remember her. I see her before me: her dark eyes flashing with daring brilliancy, dropped in a half rebellious submission, her changing colour, her fair and open brow, her beautiful mouth, with all its varying expression, her very gait, haughty even in its girlish gaiety—all rise to my mind's eye; and I feel even yet within me the remembrance of that strange distrust and bashfulness with which I endeavoured to reply to her witty sallies, and recall her to a seriousness like my own! I was no hypocrite, and yet she half hinted that I was; neither was it a dash of thoughtless enthusiasm that carried me away, though she often said so. It was the very reverse of vanity or self-exaltation—it was humility that prompted me to devote myself to a career from which others might have been withheld by the ties of home and affection.

"You forget, Margot," cried I one day, when she bantered me beyond endurance, "that I am already an idle and homeless being, without one on earth to love me!"

"But I love you, Jasper!" said she, seizing my hand and pressing it to her lips; and then, as suddenly dropping it, she became pale as death, and staggered as if falling. I caught her in my arms, but she disengaged herself at once, and with her hands pressed closely over her face, fled from the spot.

From that day she never jested with me, nor even alluded to my choice of a career. She, I fancied, even avoided being alone with me as she used to be; the playful tricks she had indulged in of hiding my serious books, or substituting for them others of a very different kind, were all abandoned. Her whole man-

ner and bearing were changed, nor could I fail to see that there was no longer between us the cordial frankness that hitherto united us. If this were, in one respect, a source of sorrow to me, in another there was a strange secret charm in that reserve, so full of meaning—in that shyness, so suggestive!

Up to that time I had been in the habit of reading with her some part of every day. My school-learning, such as it was, was yet fresh in my memory, and I was delighted to have a pupil so gifted and intelligent; but from this time forth she never resumed her studies, but pretended a variety of occupations as excuses. I know not, I cannot even speculate on how this might have ended, when a sudden change of events gave a decisive turn to my destinies.

The *battonnier* who had so kindly undertaken to look after the little remnant of Monsieur Bernois' fortune was no less prompt than he had promised. He made all the arrangements required by law, and corresponded with me on each step of the proceedings. In one of these letters was a postscript containing these words—"Is it true that you have had a serious *rencontre* with a captain of the *Chasseurs-à-Cheval*, who is still in danger from the wound he received?" Before my reply to this question could have reached him, came the following brief note:—

"MY DEAR MONSIEUR CAREW.—I learned late last night the whole circumstances of the adventure, of which I had asked an explanation from you by my letter of Tuesday. The affair is a most unhappy one on every account, but on none more than the fact, that your antagonist was Captain Carrier, the brother of the celebrated member of the Constituent of that name. I need scarcely remind you that his friends, numerous and influential as they are, are now your bitterest enemies. They are at this moment busily employed in making searches into your previous life and habits; and should all other sources of accusation fail, will inevitably make your nationality the ground of attack, and perhaps denounce you as a spy of the English Government. The source from which I obtained this information leaves no doubt of its correctness, as you will acknowledge, when I add, that it enables me to forward to you, by this enclosure, a passport for England, under the name of Bernard. I also transmit a bank order for one thousand francs, which I beg you will use freely, as if your own, and part of a fund, the remainder of which I will take an early opportunity of placing in your hands. The hurried nature of my present communi-

cation prevents me adding more, than that I am very faithfully your friend."

His initials alone were inscribed at the foot of this most extraordinary epistle. I hastened to show it to the Marquis, who, on learning the name of the writer, pronounced him one of the first men at the French bar.

"The warning of such a man," said he, "must not be neglected; and although Carrier's faction have fallen, who can answer what to-morrow may bring forth? At all events, your position as an alien is highly perilous, and you must see to your safety at once."

As for the concluding portion of the letter, he could not assist me to any explanation of it. The nearest approach to elucidation was, that many of the leading lawyers of Paris were frequently selected by their clients as depositaries of property, and that it was just possible such had been the case here.

With this meagre suggestion, he left me, and I proceeded with a heavy heart to make my preparations for departure.



CHAPTER XXXI.

HAVRE.

THE diligence passed our door, and the conductor had orders to stop and take me up, as he went by. That supper was a sorrowful meal to all of us. They had come to think of me as one of themselves, and I felt as if I was about to part with the last who would ever befriend me.

There was but little said on any side, and none of us ventured on a word alluding to my departure. At last the old Marquis, laying his hand on my shoulder, said—

“These are not days in which one can trust to the post, Jasper; but if ever the occasion offer of letting us hear of you by other means, you’ll not neglect it.”

“The Père Tonsurd will manage this for you,” broke in Ursule. “He knows how to communicate, when, and with whom he pleases.”

“But how am I to meet with him?” asked I.

“This is his address, and this letter will introduce you,” said she, giving me a carefully-folded and well-sealed packet. “Make a friend of him, Jasper, and your happiness will be the reward.”

I thought that Margot’s lip was upturned at these words, with a faint expression of disdainful meaning; but I may easily have been deceived, for as I looked again, her features were calm and unmoved.

“The Père,” resumed Ursule, “was superintendent of the ‘Chaise Dieu,’ and removed to be a Professor at Namur. He is a man of high acquirements and sincere piety, but his great characteristic is his humility. With a tenth of the ambition that others possess, he had been a Prince of the Church.”

Margot’s eyes were downcast as this was spoken, so that I could not detect how the speech affected her; but again it struck me that her mouth was moved with an expression of scorn.

“There! I hear the horn of the postilion; you hav’n’t a moment to lose!” cried Ursule.

A fond, close embrace with each in turn, and a whispered word from Margot, which I tried in vain to catch, and I was gone! I buried my head between my hands in shame, for I was crying bitterly, and never looked up till we were far away from the village, and traversing a wide open country, with great undulating fields of corn, and few traces of habitation.

"Come, come, be a man," broke in the *conducteur*, with a rough good humour. "You're not the first who had to leave his home for the conscription, and some have gone back *chefs-d'escadron*, afterwards."

I accepted the part he thus erringly assigned me, and let him run on about all the fortunes and chances of a soldier's life.

If his conversation did not divert my thoughts, it at least suffered me to pursue them unmolested; and so I travelled along through the whole of that night and the following day, seldom speaking, or only in half mechanical assent to some remark of my companion.

"They'll want to see your passport here, citizen," said he, as we approached the gate of a fortified town; "so get it ready, and don't delay the authorities."

A few minutes more brought us to the outworks of a fortification, passing through which, we crossed a drawbridge, over a deep moat, and entered a long, dark archway. Here the diligence drew up, and the passengers were ordered to descend. I overheard the *conducteur* say the word "conscript," and began to fear that he used it in relation to me, when suddenly the official, opening my passport, called out—

"Which of you is the citizen Bernard?"

I at once remembered that it was the name I had recruited under, and answered—"It is I."

"Step inside here," said he, civilly; "I have some directions with respect to you."

I walked into a small chamber off the public room, when, having carefully closed the door, he said,—

"So you are going over to England, monsieur?"

The last word was accented deeply, and with an emphasis meant to show that he who used it proclaimed himself no partisan of republican principles, but one who held to the ancient habits of the monarchy.

The manners of the time suggested distrust on all sides, and I answered guardedly, that I had some intention of visiting England.

"You will see them, then," resumed he, "and even that much

is a blessing in itself! How do I envy you! Ah, monsieur, if the name should not escape you, will you try and remember Claude Mirepois? My father was head postilion in the royal stables, and enjoyed his pension to his death; and I was educated by order of the princes, and was to have been in the household, too."

"Are we all right and regular, citizen?" broke in the *conducteur*, putting in his head.

"All right—quite right, citizen Guichemar," said the other, in some confusion: "these are ticklish times—I was anxious to see that this youth's pass was regular."

"*Parbleu!* a conscript is always *en règle*," said the other, laughing, and so hurried me away to the diligence; and once more we rattled along on our journey.

The whole of that night my mind dwelt upon this incident. Amongst the various parties that disputed for pre-eminence in the country, I had never heard of any professing royalist principles, except the Vendéans; nor had I the slightest suspicion that many concealed monarchists held places of trust under the government of the republic.

At Havre, I discovered that the measures of the police were of the very strictest kind; and that to obtain a permission to embark, it was necessary to have a reference to some citizen of the town, who should stand guarantee for your loyalty and integrity. Now, I had never been there before—I knew none, not even by name; and what was I to do? Great as my difficulty was, I did not suffer it to appear so to the commissary, but calmly said, that I'd return to my hotel, and run my eye over a list of the merchants for one to be my bail.

The packet was to sail that evening with the tide; and as the office of the commissaire closed at four o'clock, there was little time to lose. I wandered on from street to street; I walked into cafés; I sat down in the most public places, scanning with eagerness every face that passed me, and straining my eyes to try and detect the features of an acquaintance. The pursuit became at length a perfect farce, and I hurried to and fro with a burning brain, and a restless impatience that was almost maddening.

"*Parbleu!* this is the fourth time you've been in here to-day," cried a short, thick-set man, past the prime of life, and who kept a sort of slop-shop near the quay. "What do you want with me, my lad?"

I was turning to leave the spot without replying, when he closed the half-door of his shop, and placed his back against it.

"Come, my friend, you shall certainly say what has brought you here, ere you get away this time."

"I am in search of some one—I am looking for one of my acquaintances," said I, hurriedly.

"And expected to find him here?" added he, half sneeringly.

"Here—anywhere," said I, recklessly.

"Just so—I thought as much. Well, my lad, you had better give a more satisfactory account of yourself to the commissary. Come along with me to the police."

"With all my heart," cried I.

"Who are you?—whence do you come?" asked he, with somewhat of kindness in his voice.

"These are questions you have no right to ask me, citizen," replied I.

"Well, have I not a right to know why you have been four several times in my shop this forenoon, and never bought nor asked for anything?"

"That you shall hear freely and frankly," said I; "I have a passport made out for England, whither I wish to go. The authorities require that I should have some reference to a citizen of Havre, before they allow me to depart. I am a stranger here—I know of no one, not even by name. The whole of this morning I have spent, hurrying hither and thither to find out some one I have seen before, but in vain. All are strangers to me; none know me. In my wanderings, it may be that I have chanced to come here as often as you say—perhaps I have done so in twenty places, for my head is distracted, and I cannot collect my thoughts. There, then is the answer to your inquiry."

"Have you a trade or a handicraft, lad?"

"Not either."

"Nor any means of support?"

"Quite sufficient for all my wants," replied I, boldly; and at the same time producing my purse, well stored as it was with five-franc pieces.

"Ah, then, you belong to some of the *émigrés*?—you are going to join your family?" asked he, but in a lower and more cautious voice.

"Don't you think that I have been candid enough already, friend?" said I; "and do you not know sufficient of my affairs without asking me more?"

"Not if it be for more than mere curiosity," said he, drawing nearer to me. "Not if I ask from a sincere interest in you."

"But I ought, perhaps, to hear something of him that questions me," said I, affecting an amount of circumspection that was far from natural to me.

"Then go out upon the quay yonder, and ask who is Pierre Dubos. My character and my name are well known in Havre. You'll not have to ask often without an answer."

"Well, then, citizen, tell me what more you wish to learn about me. I'll tell you whatever you like, if I only know it."

"Have you dined yet, lad?" asked he, quietly.

"No; I have not had time."

"Come, then, and partake of mine;" and without waiting for an answer, he let down the shutter that closed the entrance to his shop, and led me by the arm into a room behind it.

Pierre Dubos, though nearer to sixty than fifty, was only a short time married to a very pretty and young woman, who, as he entered the room, was arranging the table for dinner. She received me with much courtesy, scarcely heeding, if she even heard, the explanation her husband gave to account for my presence.

The meal was an excellent one, and passed off with all that easy conviviality that every class of Frenchmen know how to display. Mons. Dubos seemed somewhat of a character, and rather piqued himself on doing things that others might never have thought of. His marriage appeared to have been one of these; his invitation to myself was another.

"You know, Jeanette," said he, "we might never have met if it had not been for the ferry being delayed at Honfleur. We made acquaintance on the steps of the pier, and see what has come of it! Now, I have come to know Bernard here by a similar accident. Who knows what may arise out of that?"

Madame smiled benignly in assent to the theory, the happy results of which she seemed to acknowledge.

Coffee came after dinner; and then I began to think how I should take my leave. Ere I could solve the problem to my satisfaction, Dubos said,—

"Shall we all go to the comedy this evening? They play a grand piece—one of Beaumanhui's—and it will amuse us."

Madame hailed the proposition with delight; and I really felt sorry, as I said,—

"But this will never bring me to England."

"What need to go there?—why not stay in France? Was it not a pleasanter country, and a better climate? At all events, what urgent haste was there?—would not to-morrow serve as well as to-day?"

These and such-like arguments were showered upon me, and not a little aided by many little coquetries of look and gesture.

"One thing is quite certain," said Dubos; "it is now three—the bureau closes at four o'clock; and if you know of any one in Havre who will be your sponsor, the sooner you find him the better."

This speech was uttered with so much gravity, that it completely mystified me; nor did the next remark serve greatly to elucidate matters, as his wife said she hoped "I'd have a pleasant voyage." After enjoying my astonished and puzzled look for a second or two, they both burst into a roar of laughter.

"Don't you see, Bernard," said the man, "that you have no other acquaintance in the city than ourselves; and if we have a fancy for your company, and do not care to part with it, the option is with us?"

"But if you really do feel an interest for me, you would befriend me," said I. "Is not that so?"

"And so I'm ready to do," said he, rising. "Say the word, and I'll go with you this moment to the commissary."

I arose, too. Already the syllables were on my lips, when the sudden thought flashed across me—whither am I hurrying, and for what? Was I returning to home, and family, and country? Was I going back to kind and loving friends, whose hearts were yearning for my coming? I paused, and at the same instant the laughing eyes of the young Frenchwoman seemed to read my embarrassment.

"Well," cried Dubos, "how is it to be?"

"Sit down, Pierre, and take your coffee," said she, smiling. "Citizen Bernard has not the slightest intention of leaving us. He knows, besides, that you will be just as ready to serve him any other day, and not the less so when you will have been better acquainted."

"She is right," said he, pressing me down into my seat again. "Let's have a *chasse* in ease, and quick."

I did not stop to reason the question. If I had, perhaps I should only have seen stronger cause to concur with my kind hosts. The world was a wide and trackless ocean before me, and even the humblest haven was a welcome harbour to me for a day or two.

I stayed accordingly, and went to the theatre with them. The following day was Sunday, and we went over to Honfleur, and dined at the "Trois Pigeons;" and Pierre showed me the spot where he first saw his pretty wife, and said,—

"Who knows but some day or other I may be telling of

the day, and the hour, and the way I became acquainted with you?"

As I parted with them each night, some little plan or project was always struck out for the morrow; and so I lingered on from day to day, half listless, and half pleased. At length, as I was proceeding one morning towards the house, I saw a crowd in front of a café, all busily engaged in reading a large placard which had just been affixed to the wall. It was an account of the seizure by the English of the very vessel I had intended to have taken my passage in—for, strangely enough, though the countries were at war, a species of half intercourse was kept up between them for some time, and travellers often passed from one shore to the other. This system was now, it seemed, to have an end; and it was curious to remark how bitter were the commentaries the change excited.

Pierre had learned the news by the time I reached his house, and laughingly remarked on the good luck that always attended his inspirations.

"But for me," said he, "and my wise counsels, you had been a prisoner now, and all your claims to nationality would only have got you hanged for a traitor. From the first moment I saw you, something whispered me that we were destined to know more of each other; and now I perceive that the impression was well founded."

"How do you infer that?" asked I, smiling.

"Because my instincts have never betrayed me yet."

"And what is to be the upshot of our acquaintance, then?"

"Do you ask this seriously, Bernard, or are you only jesting at my presentiments?"

"In all seriousness, and in all trustfulness," replied I.

"You'll stay here in Havre—join me in my business—make money—be a rich man—and——" he paused.

"Go on; I like the prophecy," said I, laughing.

"And, I was going to say, just as likely to lose it all, some fine morning, as easily as you earned it."

"But I have not a single requisite for the part you assign me. I am ignorant of every branch of trade and traffic; nor, if I know myself, do I possess one single quality that ensures success in them."

"I'll teach you, Bernard! There are few secrets in my craft. We deal with smugglers—we buy from them, and sell to them! For the pedlar that comes to us in our shop, in the 'Rue des Sol,' we care little; for our customers, who drop in after night-fall, we have a sincere affection. You have hitherto regarded

them in the light of visitors and friends. You little suspected that through them we carried on all our business; and just as little did it ever occur to you, that you yourself are already a great favourite with them. Your stories, your remarks—the views you take of life—all your observations are quite novel and amusing to poor fellows, whose whole experience of the world is picked up in stormy nights in the channel, or still more perilous adventures on shore. Many have already asked me when you would be with me of an evening, that they might come; others have begged they might bring friends along with them; and, in short, they like you; and they are fellows who, when they have fancies, don't grudge the price they pay for them."

I laughed heartily as I heard this. Assuredly, it had never occurred to myself to observe the circumstance, still less to make it a matter of profit or speculation; but somehow, the coarse flattery of even such admiration was not without a certain charm for my mind.

Still, it was a part I could not have condescended to practise for gain, nor perhaps, had such been my intention, could I have been equally successful.

Dubos, however, assigned me a duty, which made a happy compromise between my self-esteem and my desire for employment. This was to make acquaintance with all of that adventurous race comprised between the buccancer and the smuggler; to learn their various wants, when they voyaged, and for what, became my province. They were a wild, wasteful, and reckless class, who loved far better to deal with one who should stand to them in the relation of a companion, than as a chapman or a dealer.

If I am free to own that my occupation was not very dignified, I am equally able to assert that I never prostituted any influence I obtained in this way to personal objects of profit. On the contrary, I have repeatedly been able to aid, by good counsel and advice, men whose knowledge of adventurous life was far greater than my own; and oftentimes has it occurred to me, to obtain for them quadruple the value they had themselves set upon objects they possessed.

I can scarcely account to myself for the extraordinary interest the pursuit engendered—the characters, the places they frequented, the habits, were all of the strangest, and might reasonably have amused one ardently fond of adventure; but there was, besides all this, a degree of danger in the intercourse, that imparted a most intense degree of interest to it.

Many of these men were great criminals. Many of the valuables confided to my keeping were obtained by the most questionable means. They trafficked not alone in articles of contraband, but they dealt in the still more dangerous wares of secret information to governments; some were far less smugglers than spies. All these curious traits became revealed to me in our intercourse; and I learned to see by what low and base agencies are often moved the very greatest and most momentous incidents of the world. It was not alone that many of these men were employed by persons high in station, but they were really often entrusted with functions very disproportionate to their own claim for either character or fitness. At one time it would be a state secret; at another, some dark piece of treacherous vengeance, or some scarcely less dark incident of what fashion calls "gallantry;" while occasionally a figure would cross the scene of a very different order, and men of unquestionable station be met with in the garb and among the haunts of the freebooter.

There was scarcely a leader of the republican party with whom some member of the exiled family had not attempted the arts of seduction. With many of them, it was said, they really succeeded; and others only waited their opportunity to become their partisans. Whether the English Government actually adopted the same policy or not, they assuredly had the credit of doing so; and the sudden accession to wealth and affluence, of men who had no visible road to fortune, greatly favoured this impression. My friend Pierre Dubos troubled his head very little about these things. So long as his "brandies could be run" upon the shores of England, and his bales of silk find their way to London without encountering a custom-house, he cared nothing for the world of politics and state-craft; and it is not impossible that his well-known indifference to these matters contributed something to the confidence with which they were freely imparted to myself. Whatever the cause, I soon became the trusted depository of much that was valuable, not alone in actual wealth, but in secret information. Jewels, sums of money, securities to a great amount, papers and documents of consequence, all found their way to my hands; and few went forth upon any expedition of hazard, without first committing to my keeping whatever he possessed of worth.

I was now living in privacy and simplicity, it is true, but in the enjoyment of every comfort; but still with all the sense of a precarious and even a perilous existence. More than once had I been warned that the authorities entertained suspicion of me;

and although the police, even to its highest grades, was in our pay, it was yet possible that they should find it their interest to betray us. It was just at this time, that a secret envoy arrived from Paris at Havre, en route for England, and was arrested on entering the town. His papers were all seized, except one small packet, which was conveyed by a safe hand to myself, and my advice and counsel requested on the subject of it. The address was simply "W. P." and marked, "with the greatest speed." There was an inclosure that felt like a locket-case, or a medallion, inside, and three large seals without.

The envoy, who had contrived to disburthen himself of this in the very moment of his arrestation, at once made a signal, indicative of its pressing emergency; and his own rank and position seemed to guarantee the fact. One of our luggers was only waiting for the tide to weigh anchor, and sail for England; and the sudden resolve struck me, to take charge of the letter, and see if I could not discover for whom it was meant. Both Dubos and his wife did all in their power to dissuade me from the project. They spoke of the great peril of the attempt, and its utter fruitlessness besides; but for the former I had not many fears, and as to the latter consideration, I was fortified by a strong and deep-felt conviction, that the locket was intended for no less a personage than the head of the English ministry, and that "William Pitt" was designated by the initials of the direction. I own that the conjecture was mainly suggested to me by the constant reference made to his name, and the frequent allusions I had heard made to him by many of the secret emissaries.

If I did not impart this impression to Dubos, it was simply because I knew how little interest the subject would have for him, and that I should frame very different reasons for my journey if I looked for his concurrence. I need not stop to record the discussion that ensued between us. Enough if I say that honest Pierre made me an offer of partnership with him, if I consented to forego my journey, from which he steadily predicted that I should return no more. This prophecy had no power to deter me; nay, I half suspect that it furnished an additional argument for my going.

Having consigned to him, therefore, all the objects of value that had been left with me, and taking nothing but the few papers and letters belonging to myself, I sailed that evening; and, as day was breaking, I saw looming through the distance the tall and chalky cliffs of England. We were a long way to the northward of the part usually frequented by our skipper,

and it was not without difficulty that I persuaded him to land me in a small bay, in which a solitary cottage was the only sign of habitation.

By noon I gained the hut of a fisherman, who, though he had seen me put out from a craft that he knew to be French, yet neither expressed any surprise at my appearance, nor thought it a matter for any questioning. The shoal water and the breakers, it is true, could have prevented the spot being selected as a landing-place for troops; but nothing was easier than to use it to disembark either secret emissaries, or even a small body of men. I walked from this to a small town about eight miles inland, whence I started the same night by coach for London. I cannot convey my notion of the sense of freedom I felt at wandering thus at will, unquestioned by any one. Had I but travelled a dozen miles in France, I should have been certain of encountering full as many obstacles. Here none troubled their heads about me; and whence I came, or whither I went, were not asked by any. Some, indeed, stared at my travel-worn dress, and looked with surprise at my knapsack, covered with undressed calf-skin; but none suspected that it was French, nor that he who carried it had landed, but a few hours before, from the land of their dread and abhorrence. In fact, the England and France of those days were like countries widely separated by distance, and the narrow strip of sea between them was accounted as a great ocean. No sooner had I arrived in London than I inquired for the residence of the Prime Minister. It was not a period when the Parliament was sitting. They told me that I should rarely find him in town, but was sure of meeting with him at Hounslow, where he had taken a house for his health, then much broken by the cares and fatigues of office.

It was evening—a fine, mellow, autumn evening—as I found myself in front of a large, lonely house, in the midst of a neglected-looking garden, the inclosure of which was a dilapidated wall, broken in many places, and admitting glimpses of the disorder and decay within. I pulled the string of the bell, but it was broken; and, while I stood uncertain what course to pursue, I caught sight of a man who was leaning over a little balustrade, and apparently watching some fish in a pond at his feet. He was thin and spare-looking, with somewhat the air of premature age; and, though dressed in the very simplest manner, there was the unmistakable mark of a gentleman in his appearance.

He seemed to have observed me, but made no sign of recognition, as I came towards him. He even turned his head to look

at me, and then resumed his former attitude. I believe that I would willingly have retreated at that moment, if I knew how. I felt that my presence there was like an intrusion, and was already ashamed of it. But it was now too late; for, standing erect, and with his hands behind him, he fixed his eyes steadily on me, and asked me my business there. I replied that I wished to speak with Mr. Pitt.

"Do so, then," rejoined he. "I am he."

I hesitated for a second or two how to open my communication, but he waited for me without the slightest show of impatience, till, gaining courage, I told him in a few words by what means I had become possessed of a letter, the contents of which I had surmised might by possibility have been intended for him. Short as was my explanation, it seemed to suffice, for he nodded twice or thrice in assent as I went on, and then, taking the letter from my hand said,—

"Yes; this is for me."

So saying he turned away into an alley of the garden to peruse the letter at his leisure.

I remember, as well as though it were but yesterday, the strange crowd of sensations that pressed upon my mind as I stood there waiting for his return. Astonishment at finding myself in such a presence was the first of these; the second was a surprise to see with how little of awe or embarrassment I bore myself before one whose haughty bearing was the terror of his contemporaries. I did not know enough of life to be aware that the very fact of my humble station was the levelling influence that operated in my favour, and that if, instead of an unknown emissary, I had been the deputed envoy of a great government, I should have found the minister as coldly haughty as I had heard him described.

While I was yet surmising and reasoning with myself, he came up to me, saying,—

"They have arrested Monsieur Ducoste, you said. Is the affair like to be serious?"

"I believe not, sir. His only paper of consequence was this."

He opened the letter again, and seemed lost in contemplation of something it contained; at length he said,—

"Have you brought any newspapers or journals with you?"

"None, sir. I came away at a moment's warning."

"You are an Englishman. How came it that you have been a resident in France?"

For the first time his face assumed an expression of severity as he said this, and I could not but feel that the inquiry was

one that touched my personal honour. I replied, therefore, promptly that I had come abroad from causes of a family nature, and that they were matters which could not interest a stranger.

"They do interest me, sir," was his reply, "and I have a right to know them."

If my first impulse was to resent what I conceived to be a tyranny, my second was to clear myself from any possibility of an imputation. I believe it was the wiser of the two; at all events, I yielded to it, and apologizing for the intrusion upon time valuable as his, I narrated, in a few minutes, the leading features of my history.

"A singular story," said he, as I concluded; "the son of an Irish Opposition leader reduced to this! What proofs have you of the correctness of your account. Have you acquaintances? Letters?"

"Some letters, but not one acquaintance."

"Let me see some of these. Come here to-morrow—fetch your papers with you—and be here at eleven o'clock."

"But excuse me, sir," said I, "if I ask wherefore I should do this? I came here at considerable personal hazard to render you a service. I have been fortunate enough to succeed. I have also made known to you certain circumstances of a purely private nature, and which only can concern myself. You either believe them or you do not."

"That is precisely the difficulty that I have not solved, young gentleman," said he, courteously; "you may be speaking in all the strongest conviction of truthfulness, and yet be incorrect. I desire to be satisfied on this head, and I am equally ready to assure you that the inquiry is not prompted by any motive of mere curiosity."

I remained silent for a minute or two; I tried to weigh the different reasons for and against either course in my mind, but I was too much agitated for the process. He seemed to guess what was passing within me, and said,—

"Don't you perceive, sir, that I am your debtor for a service, and that before I attempt to acquit the obligation I ought to know the rank and station of my creditor? You would not accept of a pecuniary reward?"

"Certainly not, and as little any other."

"But I might possibly present my thanks in a form to be acceptable," said he, blandly; "and I wish you would give me the opportunity!"

And with that he bowed deeply, and walked slowly away. I returned to London with a head full of my interview.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MY REWARD.

I HAD taken up my quarters in one of the small streets which lead from the Strand to the river; a very humble abode it was, and such as suited very humble fortune. When I arrived there, after the interview I have related, I sat down, and wrote a short account of the events of my life, so far as they were known to me. I subjoined any letters and documents that I possessed which gave confirmation to my statement, addressing the entire to the minister, with the request that, if my capacity could fit me for any employment in the public service he would graciously make a trial of me; and if not, that he would enable me to return to France, where a livelihood at least was procurable.

This I despatched on a Tuesday morning, and it was not until the following Saturday that I obtained my reply. I cannot think of that painful interval even now without a shudder. The torture of suspense had risen to a fever, and for the last day and night I neither ate nor slept. On Saturday came a brief note, in these words:—

“J. C. may call at Hounslow before ten to-morrow.”

It was not signed, nor even dated; and so I was left to surmise if it had reached me in fitting time. It was scarcely eight o'clock on Sunday morning, as I found myself standing beside the wicket of the garden, which seemed as deserted and desolate as before. At an open window, however, on the ground floor, I saw a breakfast-table laid out; and, as I looked, a lady and gentleman entered, and took their places at it. One was, I knew, the minister. The lady, who was a tall and dignified person, rather than a handsome one, bore some resemblance to him. Her quick glance detected me from afar, and as quickly she called attention to my presence there. Mr. Pitt arose, and beckoned me to come forward, which I did, with no small shame and embarrassment.

While I stood at the hall-door, uncertain whether to knock

or wait, it was opened by the minister himself, who kindly wished me good morning, and desired me to follow him.

"This is the youth himself, Hester," said he, as we entered the room, "and I have no doubt he will be happy to answer any questions you may put to him."

The lady motioned to me to be seated, and in a grave, almost severe tone, said,—

"Who composed this paper—this narrative of yours?"

"I did, madam."

"The whole of it?"

"Yes, madam, the whole of it."

"Where have you been educated?"

"At Reichenau, madam."

"Where is that?"

"In Switzerland, on the frontiers of the Vorarlberg."

"And your parents are both dead, and you have actually none in the shape of relatives?"

"Not one, madam."

She whispered something here to the minister, who quickly said,—

"Certainly, if you wish it."

"Tell me, sir," said she, addressing me again, "who is this same Count de Gabriac, of whom mention is made here. Is he the person called Cuvre Tête in the circles of the Jacobins?"

"I never have heard him so called, madam."

"You know him at least to be of that party?"

"No, madam. The very little I do know of him personally would induce me to suppose the opposite."

She shook her head, and gave a faint supercilious smile as though in total disbelief of my words.

"If you have read my memoir, madam," said I, hastily, "you will perceive how few have been the occasions of my meeting with the Count; and that, whatever his politics, I may be excused for not knowing them."

"You say that you went along with him to Paris?"

"Yes, madam, and never saw him afterwards."

"You have heard from him, however, and are, in fact, in correspondence with him?"

"No, madam, nothing of the kind."

As I said this, she threw the paper indignantly on the table, and walked away to the window. The minister followed her, and said something in a low whisper, to which she replied aloud,—

"Well, it's not my opinion. Time will tell which of us was more right."

"Tell me something of the condition of parties in France," said he, drawing his chair in front of mine; "are the divisions as wide as heretofore?"

I will not go over the conversation that ensued, since I was myself the principal speaker. Enough if I say that I told him whatever I knew or had heard of the various subdivisions of party—of the decline of the terrorists, and the advent to power of men who, with equal determination and firmness, yet were resolute to uphold the laws, and provide for the security of life and property. In the course of this I had to speak of the financial condition of the country; and in the few words that fell from me, came the glimpses of some of that teaching I had obtained from the Herr Robert.

"You appear to have devoted attention to these topics," said he, with a smile. "They are scarcely the subjects most attractive to youth. How came that to pass?"

"By an accident, sir, that made me acquainted with the son of one who, if not a great financier, was at least the most notorious one the world has ever seen—Robert Law, of Lauriston." And at a sign from him to continue, I related the whole incident I referred to. He listened to me throughout with deep attention.

"These papers that you speak of," said he, interrupting, "would certainly be curious, if not actually valuable. They are still at the Rue Quincampoix?"

"I believe so, sir."

"Well, the day may come when they may be obtainable. Meanwhile, of this Count, this Mons. de Gabriac—for I want to hear more of him—when did he arrive in England?"

"I did not know that he was here, sir."

He looked at me calmly, but with great intentness, as I said this; and then, as if satisfied with his scrutiny, drew a small case from his pocket, and opening it, held it before me.

"Is this a portrait of the Count de Gabriac?"

"Yes; and a striking likeness," replied I, promptly.

"And you know his business in England, young man?" said the lady, turning suddenly from the window to address me.

"I do not, madam."

"Then I will tell you," said she.

"No, no, Hester," said the minister; "this is not necessary. You say that this is like him—like enough to lead to his recog-

tion; that is quite sufficient. Now, for yourself, Mr. Carew, for it is time I should speak of you. You have rendered a very considerable service to this Government, and I am ready to requite it. What are your own wishes in this respect?"

I bethought me for a moment what reply to make; but the more I considered, the more difficult became the reply. I might, by possibility, look too highly; or, by an equally probable error, I might place myself on too humble a level. He waited, with courteous patience, while this struggle lasted; and then, as if seeing all the force of my embarrassment, he hastened to relieve it.

"My question was, perhaps, ill-judged," said he, kindly. "I should have remembered that your knowledge of this country and its habits is necessarily limited; and, consequently, that to choose a career in it must be difficult. If you will permit me, I will myself make the choice for you; meanwhile, and until the opportunity offer, I will employ you. You speak foreign languages—at least, French and German—fluently. Well, these are exactly the qualifications I desire to find at this moment."

He paused for a second or two, and then, as though abandoning some half-formed intention, he named a day for me to wait on him at his official residence, and dismissed me.

I have now come to a portion of my history, of which I scruple to follow rigorously the details. I cannot speak of myself, without introducing facts, and names, and events which become known to me—some in strict confidence, some under solemn pledges of secrecy, and some from the accident of my position. I have practised neither disguise nor mystery with my reader; nor do I desire to do so now. No false shame, as regards myself, would induce me to stoop to this. But as I glance over the notes and journals before me—as I read, at random, snatches of the letters that litter my table, I half regret that I have been led into revelations, which I must necessarily leave incomplete, or rashly involve myself in disclosures which I have no right to publish to the world.

So far as I can venture, however, I will dare to go. And to resume where I left off: From the time I saw the minister at Hounslow, I never beheld him again. A certain Mr. Addington—one of his secretaries, I believe—received me when I called, and was the means of intercourse between us. He was uniformly polite in his manner, but still cold and distant with me; treating me with courtesy, but strenuously declining all intimacy. For some weeks I continued to wait in expectancy of some employment. I sat my weary hours in the antechamber, and

walked the lobbies with all the anxiety of a suitor ; but to all appearance I was utterly forgotten, and the service I had rendered ignored. At last, (it was about ten weeks after my interview,) as I was proceeding one morning to my accustomed haunt—hope had almost deserted me ; and I persisted, more from habit than any prospect of success—a servant, in the undress livery of one of the departments of state, met me in the street.

“ Mr. Carew, I believe ? ” said he, touching his hat. “ I have been over half the town this morning, sir, in search of you. You are wanted immediately, sir, at the Foreign Office.”

How my heart jumped at the words. What a new spring of hope burst up within me ! I questioned and cross-questioned the man, in the foolish expectation that he could tell me anything I desired to know ; and in this eager pursuit of some clue to the future, I found myself ascending the stairs to Mr. Addington’s office. No sooner had I appeared into the antechamber than I was ushered into the presence of the secretary. There were several persons—all strangers to me—present, who were conversing so eagerly together that my entrance was for some minutes unnoticed.

“ Oh ! here is Carew,” said Mr. Addington, turning hastily from the rest. “ He can identify him at once.”

A large, elderly man, who I afterwards learned was a city magistrate, came up at this, and, regarding me steadily for a few seconds, said—

“ You are well acquainted with the person of a certain Count de Gabriac ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ And could swear to his identity, if required ? ”

“ I could.”

How long I had known him, where, and under what circumstances, were also asked of me ; and finally, what space of time had elapsed since I had last seen him.

While this inquiry was going forward, I was not unmindful of the remarks and observations around me ; and, although apparently only occupied with my own examination, was shrewdly attending to every chance word that fell at either side of me. I collected quite enough from these to perceive that the Count was at that moment in England, and in custody, under some very weighty charge ; that the difficulty of identification was one of the obstacles to his committal ; and that this was believed to be surmountable by my aid. Now, I never loved him, nor did he me ; but yet I could not forget how every

care of my infancy and childhood was owing to her who bore his name and shared his fortunes, and that for me to repay such kindness with an injury would have been the very blackest ingratitude.

These thoughts passed rapidly through my mind, and as hastily I determined to act upon them. I asked Mr. Addington to give me a couple of minutes' audience in private; and he at once led me into an inner room. In scarcely more words than I have used here to mention the fact, I told him in what relationship I stood towards the Count, and how impossible it would be for me to use any knowledge I might possess, to his detriment.

"I don't think that you have much option in the matter, sir," was his cold reply. "You can be compelled to give the evidence in question, so that your very excellent scruples need in no wise be offended."

"Compelled to speak, sir!" cried I in amazement.

"Just so," said he, with a faint smile.

"And if I still refuse, sir?"

"Then the law must deal with you. Have you anything more to say to me?"

"Nothing," said I resolutely; for now my mind was determined, and I no longer hesitated what course to pursue.

Mr. Addington now returned to the adjoining room, and I followed him. For a few moments a whispered conversation was maintained between him and one or two of the others, after which the magistrate, a certain Mr. Kirby, said to me—

"It appears, young man, that you have a reluctance, from conscientious scruples, about giving your evidence in this case; but, probably, when I tell you, all that is required of you is, a simple act of identification, and, moreover, that the charge against the prisoner is the very weightiest in the catalogue of crime, you will not any longer hesitate about your obvious duty."

He waited for a few seconds, but as I made no reply, he went on—

"This Frenchman is accused of nothing less than the premeditation of a murder; that he is, in fact, a hired assassin, paid for the crime of murdering the exiled King of France. The evidence against him is exceedingly strong; but, of course, the law will place within his reach every possible means of defence. It is needless to say, that no private or personal feeling can exist in such a case, and I really do not see how you can decline your aid to the cause of justice."

I was still silent; my difficulties were increasing every moment; and as they thickened around me, I needed time to decide how to proceed.

Perhaps my anxious appearance may have struck him, for he quickly said—

“You will be specially warned against saying anything which might criminate yourself, so that you need have no fears on that account.”

These words at once suggested my course to me, and whatever peril there might lie in the way, I determined to take shelter under the pretence that I was myself implicated in the conspiracy. I do not seek to excuse myself for such a subterfuge; it was the last refuge I saw in the midst of my difficulties, and I sought it in all the misery of half-desperation.

“I am not going to betray my confederates, sir,” was my dogged reply to his appeal, and no other could all their argument and entreaties obtain from me.

Some of those present could not believe me guilty, and warmly pressed me to rescue myself, ere too late, from the odious imputation; others but saw their previous impressions confirmed by what they called my confession; and between them my poor head was racked and tortured by turns. The scene ended at last by my being committed to Newgate, under suspicion, and till further evidence could be adduced against me.

It was clear that either they greatly doubted of my guilt, or were disposed to regard me as very slightly implicated, for I was not confined in a cell, or with the other prisoners, but accommodated with a room in the gaoler's own apartment, and received as a guest at his table.

I was not only treated with kindness and attention here, but with a degree of candour that amazed me. The daily papers were freely placed before me, and I read how a well-known member of the “French Convention,” popularly called *Couvre Tête*, but styling himself the Count de Gabriac, had been brought up before the magistrates under a charge of a grave description, which, for the ends of justice, had been investigated with closed doors. Several others were in custody for their implication in the same charge, it was added—and great hopes maintained that the guilty parties would be made amenable to the law.

Mr. Holt, the gaoler, spoke of all the passing events of the day freely in my presence, and discussed the politics and position of France, and the condition of parties, with all the ease of old intimacy between us. At first, I half-suspected this to be a mere artifice to lure me on to some unguarded expression, or

even some frank admission about myself; but I gradually grew out of this impression, and saw him as he really was, a straightforward, honourable man, endeavouring to lighten the gloom of a dreary duty by acts of generosity and benevolence. Save that it was captivity, I really had nothing to complain of in my life at this period. Mr. Holt's family was numerous, and daily some two or three guests, generally persons in some degree placed similarly to myself, were present at his table, and with these my time passed smoothly and even swiftly along.

The confinement, however, and a depression of which I was not conscious myself, at length made their impression on my health, and one morning Mr. Holt remarked to me, that I was scarcely looking so well as usual.

"It is this place, I have no doubt," said he, "disagrees with you; but you will be liberated in a day or two."

"How so?" asked I, in some surprise.

"Have you not heard of Gabriac's death," said he, "by suicide? He was to have been brought up a second time for examination on Friday last, but he was found dead in his cell, by poison, on Thursday evening."

I scarcely heard him through the details which followed. I only could catch a stray expression here and there; but I collected enough to learn that he had written a full exculpation of all the others who had been accused with himself, and specially with regard to me, of whom, also, it was said, he forwarded some important papers to some one high in station.

This conversation occurred on a Saturday, and on the following Monday I was liberated.

"I told you how it would be, Mr. Carew," said Holt, as he read me out the order, "and I hope sincerely there are now better and pleasanter days before you. More prosperous ones they are likely to be, for I have a Secretary of State's order to hand you one hundred pounds, which, I can assure you, is a rare event with those who leave this."

While I stood amazed at this intelligence, he went on,—

"You are also requested to present yourself at Treverton House, Richmond, to-morrow, at eleven o'clock, where a person desires to see and speak with you. This comes somewhat in the shape of a command, and I hope you'll not neglect it."

I promised rigid obedience to the direction, and after a very grateful recognition of all I owed my kind host, we parted, warm and cordial friends, and as such I have never ceased to believe and regard him.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A GLIMPSE OF A NEW PATH.

SHALL I own it, that when I once more found myself at liberty, and with means sufficient for the purpose, my first thought was to leave England for ever? So far as I was concerned, my country had shown herself anything but a kind mother to me. It was an impulse of patriotism—a vague desire to serve her—had brought me to her shores, and yet my requital had been at first neglect, and at last imprisonment. Had I the very slightest clue to where “my mother” and Raper were, I should inevitably have set out to seek them, but of the track I knew nothing whatever. I ransacked my few letters and papers, amongst which I found the yet undelivered note to the Père Tonsurd; and this I determined to present on that very day. The mere thought of meeting with one to whom I could speak of my kind friends at Linange, was a comfort in the midst of all my desolation.

On arriving at his lodgings, however, I learned that he had gone to Richmond, and as suddenly I bethought me of my own visit, the hour for which had already gone by. Determining to repair my fault as well as I could, I set out at once, and by three o'clock in the afternoon arrived at a neat-looking house, standing in a small park, that descended to the river, and which they told me was Treverton. All I could ascertain of the proprietor was, that he was a French gentleman, an *émigré*, who had lived there for two years, and was popularly known as the “General,” his servants always giving him that title. I presented myself at his door, and sent in my card, with the request that I might be admitted to an interview.

Before I could well believe that my message was delivered, the servant returned to say that the General was expecting me since morning, and desired to see me at once. I followed him through two or three rooms, till we reached a door covered with green cloth, and which concealed another behind it, on opening which I found myself in a small chamber, fitted up like a library, where two gentlemen were seated at a table. One arose as I entered, and in a polite, but somewhat haughty tone, said,—

"You are scarcely as punctual, sir, as I had hoped. Eleven o'clock was, I think, the hour mentioned."

As the appointment had not been of my seeking, I returned a very cold and half careless apology for my tardy appearance; but he stopped me quietly, saying,—

"Apparently, then, you have not been informed as to the object of this visit, nor by whom——"

A hasty gesture from the other interrupted his speech, and he stopped short.

"I mean," added he, "that you are unaware of the reason for which your presence here has been requested."

"I have not the slightest knowledge of it, sir," was my reply.

"We wished to see and speak with you about many things in France, sir. You have latterly been there? We are given to understand that you are a shrewd observer, and we desire to learn your views of events, and of the people who direct them. Our own informant induces us to believe that the tide of popular favour is turning against the men of violent opinions, and that a wiser and healthier tone pervades the nation. Does that agree with your experience?"

"Quite so, sir; there cannot be a second opinion on the question."

"And the old attachment to the monarchy is again displaying itself, far and near, through the country?" added he, warmly.

"There I cannot go with you, sir," was my answer; and although his look was a fierce, almost an angry one, I continued—"The military spirit is that which now sways the nation, and he who can best gratify the thirst of glory will be the ruler. The kings of France have been but pageants of late."

"Be discreet, sir. Speak of what you know, and do not dare to insult——" he paused, and then added, "an ancient follower of his sovereign."

His age and his fervour repressed any resentment the speech might have suggested, and I only said,—

"You asked me for opinions, sir, and I gave you mine frankly. You must not be displeased if they do not always chime with your own."

"Monsieur is perfectly right. His remark is a just one," said the other, who now spoke for the first time.

"I think he is mistaken, though," replied the former. "I fancy that he is led away by that vulgar cant which sees in the degradation of one solitary individual the abasement of his whole class and order. By the way, you knew that same Count de Gabriac?"

I bowed my assent.

"You may speak freely of him now he is past the consequences of either our censure or our praise. You know, perhaps, that he completely exonerated you from all share in his odious scheme, and at the same time communicated certain particulars about yourself, which suggested the desire to see you here."

"Yes," said the other, with a faint but very pleasing smile. "We are relatives, Monsieur Carew; and if all that I hear of you be true, I shall not disown the relationship."

"You knew my dear mother, then," cried I, wild with the glad thought.

"Pardon me," said he, slowly, "I had not that honour. I have, however, frequently heard of her beauty and her fascination; but I never saw her."

The General here whispered a few words, to which the other replied aloud,—

"Be it so, then. My friend here," resumed he, addressing me, "is of opinion that your information and habits would well fit you for a task which will be at once one of emolument and trust. The English minister has already pointed you out as a suitable agent, and nothing but your own concurrence is now needed."

I begged for a further explanation; and he briefly told me that the Royalist party, not alone throughout France, but in different parts of the Continent, where they had sought refuge, were distracted and broken up for want of due intercourse with each other, and with the head of their party; that false intelligence and fictitious stories had been circulated industriously to sow discord and disunion amongst them, and that nothing but an actual, direct, and personal agency could efficiently counteract this peril, and restore confidence and stability to the party. Many—some of them men of the highest rank—had taken service in this way; some had condescended to accept of the very humblest stations, and almost menial duties, where they could obtain information of value; and all were ready to risk life and fortune for the Prince to whom they owed their allegiance.

"But you forget, sir, that the loyalty which reflects such honour on them, would be wanting in my case—I am not a Frenchman."

"But your mother was French," said he who sat at the table; "and of the best blood of France, too. I have told you we are relations."

A gesture of caution from the General stopped him here, and he was silent. I saw there was embarrassment somewhere; but on what ground I knew not. More to relieve the awkwardness of the moment than from any other intention, I asked what my duties might be in this capacity.

"On that head you will receive the fullest instructions," said the General. "Once say that you are ready, and at our disposal, and we shall supply you with every means and every knowledge you can wish for."

"May I have a little time to consider of it, sir?" asked I. "A night, for instance?"

"Yes, a night—certainly; only remember that whether you accept or refuse, this interview is a secret, and not to be divulged to any one."

"I shall so consider it," said I.

"You will, then, be here to-morrow at ten—at ten, remember, and this time punctually." And with that he bowed me ceremoniously to the door, the other waving his hand more familiarly, and wishing me a good-bye as I passed out.

As I reached the outer gate of the lawn, a servant hastily overtook me. It was a gentleman, he said, who wished to return to London, begged permission to accompany me, if I would so far oblige him.

"With pleasure," said I. "Will you favour me with his name?"

"The Abbé Tonsurd."

"The Abbé Tonsurd!—the very man of all others I wished to meet!" and while I was just rejoicing over my good fortune on the occurrence, he came hurrying forward to offer me his thanks.

"Chance has favoured me for once, Monsieur l'Abbé," said I, "since I have the good fortune to see one to whom I have a letter of introduction. I called this very morning at your lodgings, to deliver this."

"Oh, the rare good luck, indeed," cried he, breaking open the seal, and rapidly perusing the contents. "That dear Ursule," said he, with something very near to a smile, "always so good, and so confiding, trusts even after hope has departed; but tell me rather of themselves, for this is the theme she has not spoken of."

I rapidly related all that I knew of the family. I saw, however, that his mind was wandering from the subject ere I had finished.

"And you," said he, suddenly—"when do you set out on your mission?"

"I have not decided on accepting it."

"Not decided! Can you hesitate—can you waver for a moment? Has not the Count himself charged you with his commands?"

"And who may the Count be?" asked I.

"His Majesty the rightful King of France. You cannot be well versed in physiognomy, or you must have recognized the royal features of his race. He is every inch a Bourbon."

"He who sat at the table?"

"The same. The General Guerronville is reckoned handsome, but he is vulgar and commonplace, when seen beside his Majesty."

The Abbé, to whom, doubtless, the letter imparted sufficient to give him full confidence in me, spoke frankly and openly of the Royalist party—their hopes, and fears, and future prospects. He even went so far as to say that they were losing confidence in the English Government, of whose designs for a peace they entertained deep suspicion. Turning hastily from this, he urged me earnestly not to decline the duty proposed to me, and said at last,—

"That if no other argument could weigh with me, personal advantage might, and that success in my enterprise was my fortune made for ever."

While he was thus speaking, I was only dwelling upon what I could recall of my late scene with the King of France, and wondering what he possibly could mean by a relationship between us. The Abbé explained the difficulty away by a careless reply, as to the various small channels into which the Royal blood had been diverted, by obscure marriages and the like.

"At all events," said he, "if his majesty could remember the tie, it would come badly from you to forget it. Accept this offer, therefore, and be assured that you will serve yourself even more than his cause."

It was not very difficult to persuade me: and even where his arguments failed, my own necessities urged me to accept the offer. I therefore agreed, and charging the Abbé to convey my sentiments of gratitude for the trust reposed in me, I stated my readiness to set out at once, wherever it was deemed necessary to employ me; and with this, I lay down to rest, more at ease in heart than I had felt for months long.



CHAPTER XXXIV.

SECRET SERVICE.

WHEN I come to reflect over the space I have devoted in these memoirs of my life, to slight and unimportant circumstances—the small incidents of a purely personal character—I feel that I owe my readers an apology for passing rapidly over events of real moment. My excuse, however, is, the events were such as to render my share in them most humble and insignificant. My figure was never a foreground one; and in the great drama that Europe then played, my part was obscure, indeed. It is true, I was conversant with stirring themes. I had on many occasions opportunities of meeting with the mighty intelligences that gave the world its destiny for the time; but in no history will there ever be a record of the humble name of Paul Gervois. Such I now found myself called; and the passport delivered to me called me, in addition, “Agent Secret.” It is true, I had another, which represented me as travelling for a Dutch commercial house; but the former was the document which, in my interviews with prefects and men in authority, I made use of, and which at once obtained for me protection and respect.

It is well known that the rightful king of France in his exile made a personal appeal by letters to Bonaparte, to induce him to devote his genius and influence to the cause of the monarchy. The example of Monk was cited, and the boundless gratitude of royalty pledged on the issue. The fact is history. Of this memorable note I was the bearer. Looking back at the wondrous destiny of that great man, such an overture may easily appear vain and absurd to a degree, but it was by no means so destitute of all chance of success at the time in which it was made. Of this I feel assured, and for the following reason: There was a frequent interchange of letters between the persons attached to the exiled family and leading members of the then French Government. This correspondence was carried on by secret agents, who were suffered to pass freely from capital to capital, and more than once entrusted with even verbal communications. These agents were rigidly instructed to limit themselves strictly to the duty assigned to them, and

neither to use their opportunities for personal objects, nor for the acquirement of information on subjects foreign to their mission. They were narrowly watched, and I believe myself that a secret espionage was maintained expressly to observe them. The sudden disappearance of more than one amongst them fully warrants the suspicion that indiscretion had paid its greatest and last penalty.

By the means of these persons, then, a close and compact correspondence was maintained—a tone of familiarity, and even frankness, was, I am assured, paraded in it; while, in reality, the object of each side was purely treacherous. At one time it was a proposition to some high and leading individual to desert his party, and espouse that of its opponents; at another, it was an artful description of the decline of revolutionary doctrines, made purposely to draw from the Royalists some confession of their own future intentions; while, more important than all, there came a letter in Bonaparte's own hand, offering to Louis a sum of several millions of francs, in return for a formal renunciation of all right to that throne from which his destiny seemed sufficiently to exclude him. What a curious page of history will it fill, when this secret correspondence shall one day see the light! I know, of my own knowledge, that a great part of it is still in existence, though in the hands of those who have solid reasons for not revealing it.

At the time when I first joined this secret service, the interchange of letters was more than ordinarily great. The momentous change which had taken place in France, by the ascendancy of Bonaparte, had imparted new hopes to the Royalist party; and they were profuse in their expressions of admiration for the man who of all the world was fated to be the deadliest enemy of their race. Their gratitude was, indeed, boundless—at least it transcended the usual limits of the virtue, since it went so far as to betray the cause of the very nation to which they were at the very same moment beholden for a refuge and an asylum. Secret information of the views of the English Cabinet—the opinions of statesmen about the policy of the war, the resources, the plans, even the discontents of the country, were all commented on, and detailed; while carefully drawn-up statistics were forwarded, setting forth the ships in commission or in readiness for sea, with every circumstance that could render the information valuable.

I know not if the English Government looked with contempt on these intrigues, or whether they themselves did not acquire information more valuable than that they connived at; for

assuredly every secret agent was well known to them, and more than one actually in their pay. Of myself, I can boldly say such was not the case. I traversed the Continent, from Hamburgh to Naples; I passed freely across Europe in every direction, and on my return to England I met neither molestation nor hindrance, nor did I attract any more attention than an ordinary traveller. If I owed this immunity to a settled plan I had set down for my guidance, it is equally true that it impeded my promotion, and left me in the rank of those who were less secret agents than mere messengers. My plan was to appear totally ignorant of the countries through which I journeyed, neither remarking the events, nor being able to afford any tidings about them. I was not ignorant of the injury this course of action inflicted on my prospects. I saw myself passed over for others of less capacity; I noticed the class with which I was associated as belonging to the humblest members of the walk; and I even overheard myself quoted as unfit for this, and unequal to that. Shall I own at once that the career was distasteful to me in the highest degree? Conceal it how we could, wear what appellation we might, we were only spies; and any estimation we were held in simply depended on whatever abilities we could display in this odious capacity. It was, then, in a sort of compromise with my pride, that I stooped to the lowest grade, rather than win my advancement by the low arts of the eavesdropper.

If I seemed utterly incapable of those efforts which depended on tact and worldly skill, my employers freely acknowledged that, as a messenger, I had no equal. No difficulties could arrest my progress; the most arduous journeys I surmounted with ease; the least frequented roads were all familiar to me. Three, four, and even five days consecutively have I passed in the saddle; and whether over the rude sierras of Spain, the wild paths of the Apennines, or the hot sands of the desert, no fatigue ever compelled me to halt. The Royalist partisans were scattered over the whole globe. Some of them had taken service in the German armies; some were in the Neapolitan service; some had abjured their religion, and were high in command over the Sultan's troops; and many had emigrated to America, where they settled. Wherever they were, whatever cloth they wore, or the flag they were ranged under, they had but one cause, and one hope—the restoration of the Bourbons; and for this were they ever ready to abandon any eminence they might have gained, or any fame or fortune they had acquired, to rally at a moment beneath the banner of

him they regarded as their true and rightful sovereign. I knew them well, for I saw them near. Their littleness, their jealousies, their absurd vanity and egregious pretensions, were all well known to me; but many a time have I felt a sort of contemptuous scorn of them repelled by reflecting over the heroic and chivalrous loyalty which bound them to a cause so all but hopeless. If it be asked why I remained in a career so distasteful to me, and served a cause to which no sympathy bound me, my answer is, that I followed it with an object which had engrossed every ambition and every wish of my heart, and this was to find out "my mother" and Raper. I knew that the secrets of my birth were known to them, and that with them alone, of all the world, lay the clue to my family and kindred. While the Count lived, my mother—I cannot tell her by any other name—was fearful of revealing circumstances to me, of which he would not suffer any mention in his presence. This barrier was now removed. Besides, I had grown up to manhood, and had a better pretension to ask for the satisfaction of my curiosity.

This was, then, the stimulus that supported me in many a long and weary journey; this the hope that sustained me through every reverse of fortune, and through what is still harder to bear, the solitude of my lonely, friendless lot. By degrees, however, it began to fail within me; frequent disappointment at last so chilled my ardour that I almost determined to abandon the pursuit for ever, and with it a career which I detested. The slightest accident that foreshadowed a prospect of success was still enough to make me change my resolve; and thus I lived on, vacillating now to this side, now to that, and enduring the protracted tortures of expectation.

It was in one of these moments, when despair was in the ascendant, that I received an order to set out for Reichenau and obtain certain papers, which had been left there in the keeping of Mons. Jost, the property of a certain person whose initial was the letter C. I was given to understand that the documents were of great importance, and the mission one to be executed with promptitude. I had almost decided on abandoning this pursuit. The very note in which I should communicate my resignation was begun on the table, when the Abbé, who generally was the bearer of my instructions, came to convey this order. He was in a mood of unusual gaiety and frankness, and after rallying me on my depression, and jestingly pointing out the great rewards which one day or other would be bestowed upon me, he told me that the tidings from France

were of the very best kind ; that the insolent airs of Bonaparte were detaching from him many of his staunchest adherents ; that Pichegru openly, and Bernadotte secretly, had abandoned him. Davoust had ceased to visit at his house ; while Lasalle, and others of less note, were heard to declare, that if they were to have a master, at least it should be one who was born to the station that conferred command.

"We knew," continued he, joyously, "that we had only to leave this man alone, and he would be his own executioner ; and the event has only come a little earlier than we looked for. These papers for which you are now despatched, contain a secret correspondence between a great personage and some of the most distinguished generals of the Republic."

He said much more on this theme : indeed, he sat late, and talked of nothing else ; but I paid little attention to the subject. I had over and over again heard the same observation ; and at least a dozen eventful crises had occurred, when the Republic was declared in its last struggle, and the cause of the king triumphant.

"I perceive," said he, at last, "you are less sanguine than I am ! Is it not so ?"

"You mistake me, Mons. l'Abbé," said I ; "my depression has a selfish origin. I have been long weary of this career of mine, and the note which you see there was the beginning of a formal renunciation of it."

"It is impossible you could be so insane," cried he. "You are not one of that vulgar herd that can be scared from a noble duty by a mere name. It is not the word 'spy' that could wound you, enlisted as you are in the noblest cause that ever engaged heroism, and in which the first men of France are your associates."

"I am no Frenchman, Abbé," said I ; "remember that."

"But you are a good Catholic," said he promptly, "and, Ursule tells me, well versed in every duty of the faith."

I by no means fancied the turn our discussion was likely to take. More than once before had the Abbé made allusion to the principles which he hoped might animate me, and which at some future time might obtain for me an admission into his own order ; so I hastily changed the topic, by declaring that this journey I should certainly undertake, whatever resolve I might come to for the future.

He had far too much tact to persevere on an unpleasant theme, and after some further allusion to the prospects before me, he wished me good-night, and left me. I took my depar-

ture the next morning for Hamburg, since latterly some impediments had been thrown in our way about landing in France; and the process of verifying our passports, as "agents secrets," occupied much time, and caused delay. On the journey thither I made acquaintance with a young Pole, who, exchanging with me the private signal, showed that he was a "brother of the craft." He was a fine, dashing, good-looking fellow, with a certain air of pretension and swagger about him, that savoured more of the adventurer than of the character he wished to assume. He told me that he was the son of the Empress Catherine, and that his father had been a soldier of the Imperial Guard. The story might or might not have been true, but at all events he seemed to believe and was exceedingly vain of it.

With all the secret plotting and political intrigue of the day he appeared quite conversant, and found it difficult to believe in my ignorance or apathy.

"I conceive," said he, at last, "that you are one of those who feel ashamed of your position, and dislike the word 'spy.' Be it so; it is not a flattering name. But have we not within ourselves the power to extort by force the degree of consideration we would be held in? Any act of insubordination from one or two, or even three of us, would be sure to meet its penalty. That price has been paid before." [Here he made a significant sign by rapidly drawing his hand across his throat]. "But if we combined, met at some appointed spot, discussed our rights, and agreed upon the means of asserting them, do you believe that there exists the king or kaiser who could refuse the demand? It is not enough for me that I can pass a frontier by a secret signal, enter a minister's cabinet while others wait in the ante-chamber, or even ascend the back stairs of a palace. I want a place and a recognition in society; I want that standing in the world to which my habits and manners entitle me, and for which now my hand is ever on the hilt of a rapier, or the trigger of a pistol, to secure. It is an outrage on us that this has been delayed so long, but if it be deferred a little longer, the remedy will have passed from our hands. Already some of the governments of the Continent begin to suspect that the system works badly."

"My astonishment is only that it ever could have been permitted," broke I in, "for it is plain that to know the secrets of others, each country has had to sacrifice its own."

He gave a smile of supreme contempt and replied,—

"You are but an apprentice of the trade after all, Mons. Ger-vois, though I have often heard you called a man of tact and

shrewdness. Do you not know that we are not the agents of governments or of cabinets, but of those who rule cabinets, dread them, and betray them? The half-dozen crowned heads who rule Europe form a little fraternity apart from all the world. The interests, the passions, the jealousies, and the ambition of the several nations may involve them in wars, compel them to stand in hostility against each other, and be what is called great enemies; but while their cannon are thundering, and their cavalry charging—while squadrons are crashing, and squares are breaking—they for whose sake the blood is shed and life poured fourth, are calmly considering whether they should gain most by victory or defeat, and how far the great cause—the subjugation of the masses to the will of one—can be benefited or retarded by any policy they would pursue.”

I need not follow him in his reasonings—indeed they were more ingenious and astute than I should be able to convey by repetition. His theory was, that the rulers of states maintained a secret understanding with each other; that however the casualties of fortune should fall heavily on their countries, they themselves should be exempted from such consequences; and that the people might fall, but dynasties should be spared. As long as the Bourbons sat on the throne of France, the compact was a safe and a sure one. The revolution, however, has broken up the sacred league, and none can tell now what people are next ripe for revolt. As Bonaparte for the moment represents power in France, every effort has been made by the sovereign to draw him into this alliance—not, of course, to found a dynasty, but to serve the cause of the rightful one. I abstain from entering more fully into his views, or citing the mass of proofs by which he endeavoured to sustain them. If not convinced by his arguments, I am free to own that they made a deep impression upon me; rendered more so, perhaps, from the number of circumstances I could myself call to mind, which in my own secret service tended to corroborate them:

I asked him whither he was then going, and he told me to Moscow.

“Russia and England meditate a war,” said he. “The two cabinets are embroiled; and I am hastening with an autograph letter from one great personage to another, to say with what regret he countersigns a policy so distasteful, and how sincerely he preserves the tie of personal friendship. Believe me,” said he, laughing, “we are the professed traitors of the world; but we are simple-hearted and honest, if weighed in the scale with those who employ us!”

If I was amused by much of what he said, I was also piqued at the tone of superiority he assumed towards me, as he very frankly intimated, that by the low estimation in which I held my walk in life I had contrived to make it still meaner and lower.

"It rests with ourselves," said he, "to be the diplomatists of Europe. Your men who pore over treaties, and maps, and protocols, may plan and scheme to their heart's content; but we can act. If I choose to change the destination of this letter, and deliver it at Berlin or Vienna; or if I go forward now to Moscow, and convey the answer to Paris, instead of London, do you not suppose that the world would feel it, and to its very centre, too?"

He paused for a minute or two, and then added,—

"You are wondering all this while within yourself, why one who knows so well the price of treason has not earned it; and shall I tell you? I am not always aware of the value of my tidings. I may be charged with a secret treaty. It may be a piece of court gossip, the mishap of an archduchess, or the portrait of a court favourite. This very letter—whose contents I believe I know—I am perhaps deceived in. Who can tell, till it be opened, if my treachery be worth a farthing?"

If there was anything wanting to the measure of abhorrence with which I regarded my career, it was amply supplied by such doctrines as these; but probably much of the disgust they were calculated to inspire, was lost in the amusement the narrator afforded me. Everything about him bespoke levity, rather than systematic rascality, and yet he was one who appeared to have thought profoundly on men and the world.

"I'll wager a crown," said he, as we jumped into the boat that was to row us on shore, "that you are fully bent on hiding yourself and your shame in the 'Golden Plover,' or the 'Pilot's Rest,' or some such obscure hotel; but this you shall not for the present. You are my guest while we stay at Hamburgh. Unfortunately, the time must needs be brief to both of us. To-morrow we shall be on the road, but to-day is our own."

I did not consent without reluctance; but he would not take a refusal, and so I yielded; and away we went together to the "Schleswicker Hof," a magnificent hotel in the finest quarter of the town.

"No need to show your passport to any one," said he to me, in a whisper, as we entered the house; "I'll arrange all."

By the time I had refreshed myself with a bath, and dressed, the waiter came to say that Count Yusaffich was waiting dinner

for me ; and though I gladly would have asked a few particulars of one with whose name and person he seemed evidently acquainted, there was no time allowed me, as he led the way to a splendid apartment, where the table was already spread.

It was not without an effort that I recognized my friend the Count in his change of costume ; for, though good-looking, and even handsome before, he might now strike the beholder with admiration. He wore a blue military pelisse, richly braided with gold, and fastened with large Brandenbourg buttons. It was sufficiently open in front to display a vest of scarlet cloth, all slashed with gold. His trousers were black, with a broad gold band along the sides, while a richly-embossed belt of Russia leather supported a sabre of most costly and gorgeous make. He wore several handsome decorations ; and around the throat, by a broad blue ribbon, a splendid diamond cross, with the letters "P. C." in the centre.

"I have not dressed for dinner," said he, as I entered, "since we must take a stroll under the linden trees when it grows cool, and have our cigar there. After that, we'll look in at the opera ; and if not very attractive, I'll present you at one or two houses where they receive of an evening, and where, when you come again, you will be always welcome."

Since I had gone so far, I resolved to abide by all his arrangements, and suffer him to dispose of my time just as he pleased.

Our dinner was excellent. The Count had bestowed pains in ordering it ; and all was of that perfection in cookery for which Hamburgh was, and is, so justly famed. Nor was the wine inferior to the rest of the entertainment. Of this the Count appeared to be a connoisseur, and pressed me to taste a dozen different kinds, the very names of which were unknown to me. His conversation, too, was so amusing, so full of strange incidents and adventures, such curious anecdotes, such shrewd remarks, that I was by no means impatient to rise from table.

"I see," said he, at last, "we are too late for the opera. Hanserlist's reception is also nearly over by this time ; shall we just drop in, then, at Madame von Geysiger's ? It is the latest house here, and every one goes there to finish the evening."

"They are all strangers to me," I replied ; "and I am entirely under your orders."

"Then Madame von Geysiger's be it," said he, rising.

As we went along, he told me that the lady to whose house we were going had been, some thirty-five or forty years ago, the great prima donna of Europe. She was also the most celebrated

beauty of her time, and by these combined attractions had so captivated a rich merchant of Hamburgh, that he married her, bequeathing to her on his death-bed the largest fortune of that wealthy city.

"They count it by millions and tens of millions," said he; "but what matter to us?—at least to me?—for I have been refused by her some half-dozen times; and indeed now am under the heaviest recognizance never to repeat my proposal. If you, however, should like to adventure——"

"Oh, excuse me," said I, laughing. "Not even all the marco-brunner and champagne I have been drinking could give hardihood for such a piece of impudence."

"Why not?" cried he. "You are young, good-looking, and of a fashionable exterior. You are a stranger, besides, and that is a great point; for she is well weary of Hamburgh and Hamburghers."

I stopped him at once by saying that I was by far too conscious of the indignity attached to my career to aspire to the eminence he spoke of.

"And too proud to marry an old woman for her money! Can't you add that?" said he, laughing. "Well, there we differ. I am neither ashamed of the 'espionage,' nor should I be averse to the marriage. To say truth, my dear Gervois, when I have dined in a splendid salon, hung round with the best pieces of Cuyp, Wouvermans, and Jansens; when I have seen the dessert set forth in a golden service, of which the great Schnyders over the fireplace was but a faint copy; when I have supped my Mocha out of a Sèvres cup worth more than its full of gold louis, and rested myself on the fairest tapestries of France, with every sense entranced by luxury, I do find it excessively hard to throw my mantle over my shoulders, and trudge home through the rain and mud, to resume the sorry existence that for an hour I had abandoned."

"There lies the whole question," said I; "since, for my part, I could not throw off the identity, even under such captivations as you speak of."

He looked at me very fixedly as I said this; so fixedly, indeed, that he seemed to feel some apology necessary for it:—

"Forgive me," cried he; "but I could not help staring at the prodigy of a man content to be himself."

"I have not said that," replied I. "I only said I was incapable of feeling myself to be any other."

"You plume yourself upon your birth then, doubtless," added he; "and so should I, if I knew how to get rid of my

father. What were your people—you said they were not French?"

Had the question been put to me half an hour before, as we sat over our wine, I have little doubt that, in the expansiveness of such a situation, I should have told him all that I knew or suspected of my family. The season of confidence, however, had passed. We were walking along a crowded thoroughfare; our talk was desultory, as the objects about were various; and so I coined some history of my family for the occasion, ascribing my birth to a very humble source, and my rank as one of the meanest.

"Your father was, however, English," said he; "so much you know?"

"Yes," said I, "that point there is no doubt about."

"Is he alive?"

"No, he is dead a great many years back."

"How did he die, or where? Excuse these questions, which I have only to say, are not out of idle importunity."

I own that I did not feel easy under this cross-examination. It might mean more than I liked to avow even to myself. At all events, I resolved, whatever his object, to evade it, and at once gave him some absurd narrative of my father having served in the war of the Low Countries, where he married a Frenchwoman or a Fleming; that he died of some fever of the country, at a small fishing town on the Dutch coast, leaving me an orphan, since my mother survived him but a few months.

"All this is excellent," cried he, enthusiastically. "It could not be better by any possibility. Forgive me, Gervois, till I can explain my meaning to you more fully; but what you have just told me has filled my heart with delight. You'll see how Madame von Geysiger will receive you when she hears this."

I started back with astonishment. Could it possibly be the case that my stupid story might chime in with the facts of some real history; and should I thus be involved in the web of some tangled incidents in which I had rightfully no share? There was shame and falsehood both in such a situation, and I shrank from it with disgust.

"I will not go to this house, Count," said I, resolutely. "I foresee that somehow or other an interest would attach to me to which I can lay no claim. Neither Madame von Geysiger, nor any belonging to her, could have known my parents. Their walk in life was of the very humblest."

"I have not said she did, my dear friend," said he sooth-

ingly ; "nor is it exactly generous to be so suspicious of one whose only feeling towards you is that of kindness and goodwill. Once for all, if you desire it, I will allude no further to this subject here or elsewhere."

"On that condition I will accompany you," said I.

He pressed my hand as if in recognition of the compact, and we entered the house.

There were not above half-a-dozen carriages at the door ; but still I could perceive, as we passed through the salons, that a very numerous company was assembled. It was exactly what the Count said—a rendezvous where all came to wind up the evening ; and here were some in all the blaze of diamonds, and in the splendour of full dress ; others less magnificently attired, and some again in their walking costume. The suite of rooms then open were not the state ones in use for great occasions, but a ground floor, opening by several doors upon a handsome pleasure ground, that blending of copse and "bosquet," of terrace and shady alley, which foreigners call an English garden.

Here and there through this, many of the company lounged and loitered, enjoying the cool of a summer night in preference to the heated and crowded rooms within. We were not long in search of our hostess when she came towards us—a large, full, but still handsome person, magnificently attired, and with somewhat of what I, at least, fancied the assured air and bearing of the stage.

To the Count she was most cordial ; while to me her manner was courteous in the extreme. She regretted that we had not come earlier, and mentioned the names of some one or two distinguished visitors who had just left. After some little conversation on commonplace matters, I joined a party at ombre, a game of which I was fond, and where, fortunately, I found the players satisfied to contend for stakes humble enough for my means. The Count had, meanwhile, given his arm to the hostess, and was making a tour of the company. He appeared to have acquaintance with every one. Indeed, with most it was an easy intimacy ; and all saluted him as one they were glad to welcome. I watched him with considerable curiosity, for I own the man was a puzzle to me. At times I half persuaded myself that he was something very much above the condition he assumed ; and at other moments I suspected him to be below even that. If he be an imposter, thought I, assuredly there are more dupes than me, and in this very room too. My game soon absorbed my attention, and I ceased to

think of, or look after him. I know not how long this may have lasted; but I remember, when lifting my head from my cards, I saw straight in front of me Madame von Geysiger steadily contemplating me through her glass, and standing to do so in an attitude that implied profound scrutiny. The moment she caught my eye she dropped her "lorgnette," and hurried away, in what was clear to see was an air of confusion.

It immediately struck me that the Count had broken faith with me, and, whatever his secret scheme, had revealed it to the lady; and indignant at the treachery, I would have risen at once from the table if I could; as it was, I took the very first opportunity that presented itself, and by feigning the fatigue of a long journey, I made my excuses, and withdrew.

My next care was to leave the house without attracting any notice, and so I mingled with the crowd, and held on my way towards the room by which we had entered. The dense throng interrupted my progress, and in order to make my escape more rapidly I passed out into the garden, intending to enter the house again by some door lower down. To do so more secretly, I moved into one of the dark alleys, which, after following some time, brought me out upon a little open space, with a small marble fountain spouting its tiny jet in the midst of a clear and starlit pond. Though so near to the house, the spot was still and noiseless, for the thick copse on every side effectually excluded sound. The calming influence of the silence and the delicious freshness of the night air induced me to linger here for a while, and even longer, too, I should have stayed, had not the sound of voices warned me that some persons were approaching. That they might pass without observing me, I stepped hastily into the bosquet, and concealed myself in the thick and leafy cover. My misery and terror may be imagined when I heard my own name uttered, and then perceived that it was the Count and Madame von Geysiger, who now stood within a few feet of where I was, in deep and secret conference.

Not all my training in my odious mode of life had reconciled me to the part of an eavesdropper. Yet what could I do? Should I discover myself, no explanation could possibly account for my situation, nor would any assurances on my part have satisfied them of my ignorance. I will not presume to say, that if these were my first thoughts, my second, with some tinge of sophistry, suggested, that if treachery were intended me, it would be unpardonable in me to neglect the means of defeating

it. There is assuredly a stronger impulse in curiosity, united with fear, than exists in most other incentives—for, reason how I would, it was impossible for me to resist the temptation thus presented to me.

"You mistake him, Anatole," said the lady; "believe me, you mistake him. I have watched his countenance, and read it carefully as he sat at cards, and my interpretation of him is, that he would never consent."

"The greater fool he, then," replied the other. "Take my word for it, his splendid abilities will not stand him in such stead as his mongrel parentage and mongrel tongue. But I do not—cannot agree with you. It is just possible that so long as the world goes smoothly with him, and no immediate pressure of any kind exists, that he might refuse. But why need that continue? If fortune will deal him bad cards, don't you think we might contrive to shuffle the pack ourselves?"

She muttered something I could not hear, and he quickly rejoined—

"Even for that I am not unprepared—no, no. Be assured of one thing, he may decline, but will not defy us."

"I know where your confidence is, Count," said she; "but that rapier of yours has got you into more trouble than it has ever worked you good."

"Parbleu, I have no reason to be ungrateful to it!" replied he, laughing; "and, perhaps, with all its rust, it may do some service yet."

"At all events," said she, "bethink you well of the consequences before you admit him to any confidence. Remember that, when once he is entrusted with our plan, he is the master of our secret, and we are without a remedy. Pshaw!" said she, scornfully, as if in reply to some gesture on his part, "that remedy may be applied once too often."

My heart beat fast and full as I heard these words, whose significance there could not be a doubt of, as the same curiosity to discover some clue to the scheme by which I was to be snared, was superior to all my fears, and I half resolved, at whatever risk it might cost, to suffer myself to be drawn into the intrigue. They now moved on, and though I could hear their voices stop in low discourse, I could not detect the words they uttered. It was evident that some proposition was to be made to me, the rejection of which on my part might involve me in the greatest peril! With what straining ingenuity did I endeavour to divine what this might be! In all likelihood it referred to some political intrigue, for which my character, as a "secret agent," might

seem to adapt me. Yet some of the expressions they had let drop by no means favoured this interpretation. What could my "mongrel nationality," as the Count styled it, avail me in such a conjuncture?

As these thoughts were chasing each other through my mind, I was threading my way through the salons, and at length, to my sincere satisfaction, found myself in the open street. By the time I reached the hotel I had made up my mind to start at once on my mission, without waiting for the Count's arrival. I hastily scratched a few lines of commonplace acknowledgment for his attentions to me, and half-significantly adding that I hoped to express them personally when we met again, wished him a "good-journey," and then set out on my own.

During the rest of that night, and, indeed, for a great part of the following day, I did not feel satisfied with myself for what I had done. It was, indeed, an inglorious mode of escaping from a difficulty, and argued more of fear than resolution. As time wore on, however, I reasoned myself into the notion, that against secret treachery, courage and firmness avail little, and if a well-planned scheme was about to environ me, I had done the wisest thing in the emergency.

I suppose the experience of others will bear me out in saying that the actual positive ills of life are more easily endured than the vague and shadowy dangers which seem to hover over the future, and darken the road before us. The calamities that lie in ambush for us are ever present to our thoughts. The hour of our misfortune may be to-day, to-morrow, or the day after. Every chance incident of untoward aspect may herald the bad tidings, and we live in unceasing expectancy of evil. Do what I would, a dreary and despondent gloom now settled on me; I felt as if I were predestined to some grievous misfortune, against which I was utterly powerless, and the hour of which I could neither hasten nor retard. How bitterly I reproached myself for making an acquaintance with the Count! For years I had lived a life of solitary seclusion, avoiding even the commonest forms of acquaintanceship. The shame my calling inspired me with made me reluctant to know those who, perhaps, when they discovered me to be the spy, would have regarded me with aversion! Not that in reality the odious epithet could, with any fairness, be applied to me. My "secret agency" had not risen beyond the mere functions of a messenger; and, though at times I was entrusted with verbal communications, they were delivered in confidence of my trustworthiness, and not imparted in any reliance on my skill to improve them, but I cannot stoop

to apologize for a condition to which bitter necessity reduced me, and which I clung to as offering the last remnant of hope to find out those who, of all the world, were the only ones who bore me affection.

I have already said that this hope was now fast dying out; repeated disappointment had all but extinguished it; and it was only when the name "Reichenau" had again stirred its almost cold embers, that I determined on this last chance ere I abandoned my career for ever.



CHAPTER XXXV.

"DISCOVERIES."

ONLY ye who have felt what it is, after long years of absence, after buffeting with the wild waves of life, and learning by heart that bitter lesson they call the world, to come back to what was once a home, can form some notion of the mingled emotions of joy and sorrow with which I drew near Reichenau.

As the road grew gradually more steep, and the mountain gorge became narrower and wilder, I found myself at each moment in sight of some well-remembered object. Now it was a well beside which I had often rested; now a cross or a shrine beneath which I had knelt. Here was a rocky eminence I had climbed to gain a wider view of the winding valley before me; here was a giant oak under which I had sheltered from a storm. Every turn of the way brought up some scene, some incident, or some train of long-forgotten thought of that time when, as a boy, I wandered all alone, weaving fancies of the world, and making myself the hero of a hundred stories. Sad and sorrowful as it is to reckon scores with our hopes and mark how little life has borne out the promises of our youth, yet I cannot help thinking that our grief is nobly recompensed by the very memory of that time, that glorious time, when, shadowed by no scepticism, nor darkened by any distrust, we were happy, and hopeful, and confiding. It is not alone that we recur to those memories with pleasure; but we are actually better for

the doing so. They tell of a time when our hearts were yet uncorrupted, our ambitions were noble, and our aspirations generous. They remind us of a period when the episodes of life rarely outlived the day, and our griefs never endured through half the night. And so comes it that when, in after-years, we are tired and careworn by the world, it is not to our experience of mankind we look for support and comfort, but to the time when, in happy innocence, we wandered all alone, peopling space with images of kindness and goodness, and making for ourselves an ideal world, so much better than the real one!

It was sunset. The “Angelus” was ringing as I entered Reichenau, and the postilion—a mountaineer—reverently descended from the saddle, and knelt upon the roadside in silent prayer. How long was it since I had witnessed even so much of devotion! The world in which I had mixed had its occupations of intrigue and plot, its schemes of greatness, and wealth, and power; but no space for thoughts like those of this poor peasant. Alas! and was I not myself corrupted by their contact! That penitent attitude—that prayerful look—those clasped hands—were now all objects of astonishment to me, when once I had deemed them the fit accompaniment of the hour. Too truly was I changed from what I had been!

Night was falling fast as we reached the bridge, and a light twinkled in the little window which had once been the Herr Robert’s. A little further on, I saw the chateau and the terrace; then came the tower of the old church; and as we turned into the Platz, I beheld the arched gateway, and the small, diamond-paned window of the little inn. How sadly did they all remind me of my solitary existence: for here, in the midst of every object of my childish memory, was I, friendless and alone. A little crowd gathered around the carriage as I got out. The staring rustics little thought that he who then descended had been, perhaps, their play-fellow and companion. The postilion had styled me an “Excellency,” and the landlord received me with all his deference.

I pretended that I should stay a day or two in expectation of a friend’s arrival, and ordered the best rooms in the house; and, as was not unusual in those days, begged the favour of my host’s company at supper. The invitation was gladly accepted, and Herr Kirschler entertained me till past midnight with an account of Reichenau and its inhabitants. I affected to know the village as a mere traveller, who had passed through it some years back, on my way to Italy; and the host, with true inn-

keeper memory, remembered me perfectly. I was fatter, or thinner, or browner, or somewhat paler than before; but in other respects little changed. So, at least, he told me, and I accepted the description. I reminded him that when I last came through, the chateau had been a school—was it so still?

“Yes; and Mons. Jost was still the master, although now very old and infirm, and, of course, little able to direct it. In fact, he devoted his time far more to beetles and butterflies than to the boys; and so most of the scholars had left him, and the school was rapidly declining.”

I turned the conversation on Reichenau itself, and asked in a careless tone if strangers ever sought it as a residence. He shook his head sorrowfully, and said rarely, if ever.

“There had,” he added, “been one or two families who had fled thither on the outbreak of the French Revolution, but they had long since taken their departure. One of them,” added he, rising and opening the window, “one of them lived yonder, where your Excellency sees that old tower; and mean as it looks without, I can assure you it is still poorer within; and yet they were noble—at least so it was said here.”

“You cannot remember the name?” said I.

“No; but it is written in one of my old ledgers.”

“Will you do me the kindness to look for it?” said I, “as these things have a deep interest for me, since I have known so many of the exiled families.”

It was in no spirit of curiosity that I made this request—I needed nothing to aid me. There stood the old tower which contained my play-room; there, the little window at which I have sat, silent and alone, whole nights long. It was to conceal my emotion that I wished him away; and scarcely had he left the room, when I hid my face within my hands, and sobbed aloud. The search occupied him some time; and when he returned I had recovered myself sufficiently to escape his notice.

“Well, have you found it?” said I.

“Yes, your Excellency, here it is”—in the lady’s own writing too.

The words were simply the routine entry of travellers in the “police sheet” of the hotel—stating that Madame la Comtesse de Gabriac, accompanied by *son secretaire*, M. Raper, had passed two days there, and then departed for—— The word had been written, and then blotted out.

“For where?” asked I.

"That is the strangest point of all," said he; "for after having taken the places for Milan and their passports all viséd for that city, when day broke they were not to be found. Some peasants, who came to market that day, thought they had seen them on the mountains taking the path to Feldkirch; but, wherever they went, they were never heard of more."

"Do you mean that they had to set out on foot?"

"*Parbleu!* your Excellency; the route they took can be travelled in no other fashion."

"But their baggage—their effects?"

"They were of the lightest, I assure you," said he, laughing. "Madame la Comtesse carried hers in a kerchief, and Mons. le Secrétaire had a common soldier's knapsack, and a small bundle in his hand, when he came here."

I suppose the expression of my face at the ribald tone of this remark must have intimated what I felt, but tried to conceal, since he speedily corrected himself and said, in a voice of apology,—

"It is not, assuredly, at their poverty I would sneer, your Excellency; but, for persons of their condition this was not the suitable way to travel."

"Did they leave no friends behind them, who might give a clue to their mysterious departure?"

"Friends! No, your Excellency, they were too proud and too highly born for us of Reichenau—at least the Comtesse was; as for Mons. Raper, poor fellow, he was a teacher at Mons. Jost's yonder, and rarely seen amongst us."

"And how do you explain it?—I mean, what explanation was the common one in vogue in the village?"

"As for that, there were all manner of rumours. Some said they had fled from their debts, which was false; for they had sold the little they possessed, and came to pass the two last days here while paying whatever they owed in the village. Some thought that they had been hiding from justice, and that their refuge had been at last discovered; and some, among whom I confess myself one, think that it was with reference to the Count's affairs that they had taken to flight."

"How do you mean?" asked I.

"Oh, De Gabriac was a 'bad subject,' and if report speak truly, was implicated in many crimes. One thing is certain—before they had been gone a week the gendarmes were here in search of him; they ransacked the lodging for some clue to his hiding-place, and searched the post for letters to or from him."

"And so you think that it was probably to avoid him that she fled?" said I, hazarding a question to obtain a fuller admission than he had made.

"That is precisely my opinion; and when I tell your Excellency that it was on receiving a letter from Paris, most probably from him, that she hastily sold off everything, you will possibly be of my mind also."

"And Gabriac, did he ever appear here again?"

"Some say he did; but it is doubtful. One thing, however, is certain—there was a teacher here in M. Jost's academy, a certain M. Augustin, who gave lessons in mathematics, and the secret police gave him some tidings that made him also leave this; and the report is, that Gabriac was somehow the cause of this. Nobody ever thought ill of Augustin, and it is hard to believe he was Gabriac's accomplice."

I could perceive, from this reply of the host, that he was "all abroad" as to any real knowledge of events, and had only got some faint glimmerings of the truth. I now suffered him to run on about people and occurrences of which I knew nothing, so as to divert him from any attention to myself; and then betook me to my bed with an anxious mind and a wearied one.

I was up early the next morning, and hastened to the chateau, where I found my old master already up, and walking in the garden. He was, indeed, much changed. Time had told heavily on him, too, and he seemed far more feeble than I expected to find him. The letter with which I was charged for him invited him to make me any confidential communication he desired to impart, and to regard me as trustworthy in all respects. He read it over, I should think, several times—for he sat down on a bench, and seemed to study it profoundly.

"You shall have the papers," said he at length; "but I doubt that they will be found of use now. Dumourier's influence is at an end with his old adherents. The party is broken up; and, so far as human foresight can go, the cause is lost."

"I ought to tell you, Mons. Jost," then broke I in, "that, although you are speaking to one who will not abuse your confidence, that it is also one who knows nothing of the plan you speak of."

He appeared to reflect some minutes over my words, and then said—

"These are matters, however, not for my judgment. If the Prince think well of the scheme, it is enough."

I saw that this was said unconsciously and to himself, and so I made no remark on it,

"At all events, Mons. Gervois," continued he, "let them not build upon many whose names are here. We saw what Dejaunay became t'other day. Jussard is little better than a spy for the First Consul; and as for Gabriac, to whom we all trusted, he would have been even worse than a spy, if his villany had succeeded."

"You knew him, then, sir?" asked I.

"Knew him! *Parbleu!* I did know him; and better, too, than most did! I always said he would play the traitor—not to one, but to every cause. He was false to all, sir," said he, with increasing bitterness; "to his King; to that King's enemies; to the Convention; to the 'Emigration;' to the nobles; to the people;—false everywhere and to every one! False to her who bore his name, and to her whom he led away to ruin—that poor girl! whose father's chivalrous loyalty alone might have protected her—how do you call him—the Marquis de Bresinart? No, not him; I mean that old loyalist leader, who lived near Valence."

"Not the Marquis de Nipernois?" said I, in trembling eagerness.

"The same; the Marquis de Nipernois, to whose daughter he was once betrothed, and whose fair fame and name he has tarnished for ever!"

"You do not mean that Gabriac was the seducer of Madame de Bertin?" said I.

"The world knows it as well as I do; and, although one alone ever dared to deny it, and branded the tale with the epithet of base scandal, she came at last to see its truth; and her broken heart was the last of his triumphs!"

"You speak of the Countess—his wife?"

He grasped my hand within one of his own, and pressed the other across his eyes, unable to speak, through emotion. Nor were my feelings less moved. What a terrible revelation was this! Misfortune upon misfortune, and De Gabriac the cause of all!

For a moment I thought of declaring myself to be his old pupil, and the child who had called that dear Comtesse "mother;" but the morbid shame with which I remembered what I then was, stopped me, and I was silent.

"You know, of course, whither she went from this, and what became of her?" asked I, anxiously.

"Yes. I had two letters from her—at long intervals, though; the last, when about to sail for Halifax——"

"For Halifax!—gone to America?"

"Even so. She said that the Old World had been long unkind to her, and that she would try the New! and then as their only friend in Hamburgh was dead——"

"They were at Hamburgh!—you did not say that?" said I.

"Yes to be sure. Mons. Raper, who was a worthy, good man, and a smart scholar, besides, had obtained the place of correspondence clerk in a rich mercantile house in that city, where he lived with credit, till the death of the head of the firm. After that, I believe the house ceased business, or broke up. At all events, Raper was thrown on the world again, and resolved to emigrate. I suppose if Mons. Geysiger had lived——"

"Geysiger!—is that the name you said?"

"Ay; Adam Geysiger—the great house of Geysiger, Mersman and Dorth, of Hamburgh, the first merchants of that city."

Though he continued to talk on, I heard no more; my thoughts became confused, and my head felt turning with the intense effort to collect myself. Geysiger! thought I; the very house where I had been at Hamburgh—where I had overheard the project of a plan against myself! Could it be, that through all my disguise of name and condition, that they knew me? With what increase of terror did this discovery come upon me! If they have, indeed, recognized me, it may be that some scheme is laid against my life. I could not tell how or whence this suspicion came; but, doubtless, some chance word let drop before me in my infancy, and dormant since in my mind, now rushed forth to my recollection with all the power of a fact!

I questioned the old man about this Geysiger—where he had lived, whom he had married, and so on; but he only knew that his wife had been an actress. I did not ask for more. The identity was at once established. I next tried to find out if any relations of friendship or intimacy had subsisted between the Comtesse and Madame de Geysiger; but, on the contrary, he told me they had not met nor known each other when she wrote to him; and her stay after that in Hamburgh was very brief. I wearied him, with asking to repeat for me several circumstances of these strange revelations; nor was it till I saw him fatigued and half exhausted, that I could prevail on myself to cease. I had now loitered here to the last limit of my time; and, with an affectionate leave of my kind old master, I left Reichenau, to make my way with all speed to England.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE ORDEAL.

My first care on arriving in England was to resign my post as an "Agent secret." This was not, however, so easily accomplished as I thought; for the Royalists had more than once before discovered that those in their employment had been seduced into the service of their enemies, whose rewards were greater, and who had a large field of patronage at their disposal. Unable to prevent these desertions by the inducements of profit, they had resorted to a system of secret intimidation and menace, which unquestionably had its influence over many.

I have not space here to dwell on a theme, some of whose details might, however, prove amusing, illustrating as they did the mysterious working of that Jesuit element which laboured so zealously and so long in the cause of the Restoration. There is a little work still extant, called "*L'Espionage et ses Dangers*," by Jules Lacoste, published at Bruxelles, in 1802, which gives, if not a perfectly authentic, at least a very graphic, description of this curious system. The writer distinctly alleges that five of his colleagues met their deaths by poison, on mere suspicion of their disloyalty, and gives the names of several whose impaired faculties and shattered health showed that they had narrowly, but perhaps not more fortunately, escaped a similar fate.

For my own part, I must own that such perils were not mine. It is true, I was asked to reconsider my determination. It was at first hinted vaguely, and then positively assured me, that my long and faithful services were on the eve of a high and substantial recognition. I was even told that my own wishes would be consulted as to the nature of my reward, since I was not to be treated like one of the mere herd. When all these temptations were found to fail, I was left, as it were, to reflect on the matter, while, in reality, a still more ingenious and artful schémé was drawn around me—the Abbé being employed as its chief agent. Affecting, in a measure, to coincide with and even encourage my determination, he invited me constantly to

his lodgings, and by degrees insinuated himself into my confidence. At least he learned that it was in pure disgust of the career itself that I desired to forsake it, and not with any prospect of other advancement in life. He sought eagerly to discover the secret subject which engaged my thoughts—for I could not succeed in concealing my deep pre-occupation—but he cautiously abstained from ever obtruding even a word of question or inquiry. Nor did his ardour stop here; he studied my tastes, my passions, and my disposition, as subjects for successful temptation. I was young, high-couraged, and enthusiastic; and yet he found me indifferent to pleasure, and indisposed to society and its amusements. He knew me to be poor, and yet saw clearly that wealth did not dazzle me. I was humble and unknown; yet no recognition of the high and great could stir my heart, nor awaken my ambitions. He was too well read in human nature to accept these as signs of an apathetic and callous disposition: he recognized them rather as evidences of a temperament given up to some one and engrossing theme.

I own that in my utter destitution there was a pleasing flattery to me in this pursuit; and I could not but feel gratified at the zeal with which he seemed to devote himself to comprehend me. He exposed me to the various subjects of temptation which so successfully assail youth; but he perceived that not one could touch the secret cord of my nature. To some I was averse; I was indifferent to others. He took me into society—that circle of his intimates, which really in conversational excellence surpassed anything I had ever met before; and although I enjoyed it at the time, I could refrain from frequenting it without a regret.

"You are a puzzle to me, Bernard," said he, addressing me by my former "sobriquet," which he always used in private; "I want to see you take interest in something, and show that humanity is not dead within you; but nothing seems to touch, nothing to attract you; and yet it was not thus that Sister Ursule first represented you to me. She spoke of you as one that could be warmed by the zeal of a great cause, and whose faculties would expand when once engaged in it. If the monarchy be too mean for your ambition, what say you to the church?"

I pleaded my unworthiness, but he stopped me, saying—

"The career it is that creates the man. Only resolve firmly to fulfil a duty, and mark how capacity comes of mere volition! Ursule herself is an instance of what I say. Bred up amidst those who only cared for the world and its vanities, see what

she became by the working of noble devotion, and see what has Margot sunk to for want of it!"

"Margot! what of her?" asked I, eagerly. "You did not tell me that you had tidings of her."

The sallow cheek of the Abbé seemed tinged with a faint colour as I uttered these words with unusual warmth. Whatever his feelings, however, they were quickly under control, as he said—

"Margot has fallen—fallen as never before fell one of her high estate!"

I could not speak from emotion, but by my anxious look I entreated him to continue. The recital, as he gave it, was a long one, but briefly told was this:—Margot had been "prepared" by her sister for admission into the restored convent of the "Chaise Dieu," and at length had entered upon her novitiate. This being completed, she had returned home, in compliance with the precepts of the order, to mix in the world and its pleasures for three months—the abandonment of such temptation being accepted as the best evidence of fitness for the last solemn vow. Dangerous as such an ordeal would seem, yet scarcely ever is one found to fail under it. The long previous training of the mind, the deep impression made by a life of unbroken devotion, and that isolation that comes of a conventual existence, joined to the sense of disgrace attendant on desertion, all combine to make the novice faithful to her first pledge. The trial is, therefore, little other than a formality, and she who goes through it seems rather a martyr suffering torture than a youthful spirit taking its last fleeting glimpse of joy for ever!

To fulfil this accustomed ceremonial—for it was simply such—Margot came home to her father's house. The violent spirit of the revolutionary period had given way to a more calm and dispassionate tone, and already the possessors of ancient names and titles were returning to the respect they once were held in. In the little village of Linange the old Marquis was now esteemed a high personage—by some, indeed, was he placed above the "Maire" himself. To do his daughter honour was, therefore a duty; and every one whose rank gave them the pretension, endeavoured to show her some mark of respect and attention. Small as the community was, it had its dignitaries and its leaders, and they vied with each other on this occasion.

Margot had been a favourite—she was about to be a nun—two claims which appeal to the heart by separate roads; for, while one exacts admiration, the other disarms jealousy. Thus, even

they who would have felt the rivalry of her beauty as a subject of irritation, could now bestow their praises on her without a pang. This flattery of admiration from every quarter was too much for the brain of one whose chief fault was vanity. The splendour of her dress, the presents lavished on her, the worship which reached her wherever she went, all served to heighten the fascination; and, while Ursule prayed and entreated her to remember that these were but as the flowers that deck the victim at the altar, she would not heed her. How could she? Was not the swell of approving voices which met her in society louder than the faint whisperings of her sister's admonition? How could the cold warnings of prudence stem the torrent of adulation that swept through her heart? She was conscious, too, of her beauty; and, for the first time, felt that its influence was experienced by others. The reputation of the lovely novice spread far and near, and strangers came to Linange to see and speak with her. The little weekly receptions at the "Mairie" were crowded with new faces. Officers from the garrison at Valence, and travellers, were continually arriving; and "La Belle Margot" was a toast pledged by hundreds who never saw her.

From Ursule alone came words of warning. The world of her acquaintance met her with nothing but flattery, and flattery, too, more palpably expressed than is usual, since used to one upon whom, in a few days, life was to close for ever.

Margot was told that, to waste her charms on the dull world of a little village, was an insult to her own beauty, and that Valence, which so long had heard of, should certainly see her. She believed this, and accordingly insisted on going there. At Valence her triumphs were greater than ever; but there she heard that Paris alone could rightly appreciate loveliness such as hers. They told her, too, that it was an age in which beauty was sovereign; and the nation, wearied of a monarchy, had accepted military glory and female loveliness as the true elements of command. The will of the novice is a law at this period; and the old Marquis, who had now regained some remnant of his fortune, set out for Paris.

The most hacknied in the world's ways knows well with what a sense of enjoyment he finds himself in Paris, the most brilliant of all the cities of the earth. The gorgeous panorama of life that passes there before his eyes has nowhere its equal. What, then, must it have appeared to the fresh enthusiasm of that young girl, eager for pleasure, for excitement, and admiration!

At first her whole soul was bent upon the gorgeous spectacle before her—the splendour of a scene such as she in imagination had never realized. The palaces, the military pomp, the equipages, the dress, were far above all she had conceived of magnificence and display; but the theatres imparted a delight to her beyond all the rest. The ideal world that she saw there, typified a world of passionate feeling, of love, joy, ambition, and triumph! What a glorious contrast to the grave-like stillness of the convent—to the living death of a poor nun's existence! It is true, she had been taught to regard these things as sinful, and as the base conceptions of a depraved nature; she had even come to witness them to confirm the abhorrence in which she held them, and show that they appealed to no one sentiment of her heart. Alas! the experiment was destined to prove too costly.

The splendour, the beauty, the glowing language of the scene—the strains of music, softer and more entrancing than ever swept across her senses—the very picturesque effect of everything, varied with every artifice of light and shadow, carried her away, and bore her to an ideal world, where she, too, had her homage of devotion, where her beauty had its worshippers, and she was herself loved. It was in vain that she tried to reason herself out of these fancies, and regard such displays as unreal and fictitious. Had they been so, thought she, they could not appeal, as I see and know they do, to the sympathies of those thousands whose breasts are heaving in suspense, and whose hearts are throbbing in agony. But more than that, she beheld the great actress of the day received with all the homage rendered to a queen in the real world.

If ever there was one calculated to carry with her from the stage into society all the admiration she excited, it was that admirable actress, who was then at the very outset of that brilliant career which for nigh half a century adorned the French stage, and rendered it the most celebrated in Europe. Young, beautiful in the highest sense of the word, with a form of perfect mould, gifted and graceful in every gesture, with a voice of thrilling sweetness, and a manner that in the highest circles found no superior, Mdlle. Mars brought to her profession traits and powers, any one of which might have ensured success. I remember her well! I can bring to mind the thundering applause that did not wait for her appearance on the boards, but announced her coming—that gorgeous circle of splendid and apparelled beauty, stimulated to a momentary burst of enthusiasm—that waving pit, rocking and heaving like a stormy

sea—the hoarse bray of ten thousand voices, rude and ruthless enough many of them, and yet all raised in homage of one who spoke to the tenderest feelings of the heart, and whose accents were the softest sounds that ever issued from human lips. And I remember, too, how, at the first syllable she uttered, that deafening clamour would cease, and, by an impulse that smote every one of that vast assemblage in the same instant of time, the stillness was like the grave!

Margot became so fascinated by her that she would not lose one single night when she performed. It was at first a pleasure—it then became a passion with her. The real life she mixed in became poor, weak, and uninteresting, beside the world of intense feeling the stage presented. The one seemed all false, unreal, and fictitious; the other, truthful, and addressing itself to the heart direct.

Mdlle. Mars herself at length remarked the lovely girl, who, with eager gaze and steadfast, sat each night in the same place, indifferent to everything, save the business of the scene. She felt the power she exercised over her, and saw how her whole nature was her captive. Once or twice their eyes actually met, and Margot felt at the moment, that she was beneath the glance of one who read her very thoughts, and knew each working of her heart.

A few nights after this, they met in society, and Mdlle. Mars, without introduction of any kind, approached and spoke to her. The words were few and commonplace—some half apology for a liberty—an expression of pleasure at meeting her, and a kind of thankful return for the attention by which she marked her. She saw the attraction which the stage possessed for her, and made it the subject of their conversation. The great actress was herself an enthusiast about her art, and when she spoke of it, her genius kindled at once, and her words rose to high eloquence. She told Margot the whole story of her own devotion to the stage—how she had been destined to the cloister, and that an accidental visit to the theatre at Nancy had determined the entire fortunes of her life. “I felt within me,” said she, “a power of expression that I could not bear to bury beneath the veil of the nun. The poetry that stirred my heart should find its utterance; nor could I endure the stormy conflict of passion that raged within me, save in giving it a form and a shape. I became an actress for myself, and hence, perhaps, why I have met with the applause of others.”

Margot's acquaintance thus casually formed ripened into intimacy, and quickly into a close friendship. The ritual that

prescribed the ordeal through which she was going, ordained that it should be restricted by scarcely a limit. The novice was really to be her own mistress for a brief season in that world she was to leave so soon, and for ever. She now accompanied Mdlle. Mars not only into the wide circle of Parisian society, but into that far more seductive one, which consisted of her most intimate friends. Here she met all that boasted of artistic excellence in the capital—the brilliant dramatist, the witty reviewer of the *Débats*, the great actor—it was Talma in those days—the prima donna who was captivating all Europe, and a host of lesser celebrities, all brimful of spirits, joy and gaiety, as people with whom the world went well, and whose very business in it was that of pleasure and amusement. I need not trace the course by which Margot grew to a perfect infatuation with such company. Wiser and calmer heads than hers have been unable to resist the charms of a society made up of such elements, nor was she herself to pass without admiration from them. Her beauty and her youth, the mingled gentleness and energy of her temperament, her girlish modesty, blended with a highly-wrought enthusiasm, were exactly the qualities which they could value and appreciate.

“What gifts for the stage!” said one of the greatest amongst them, one night; “if Mademoiselle was not a Marchioness, she might be a Mars.”

“But I am going to be a nun,” said she, innocently; and a joyous burst of laughter received the speech. “It is quite true,” said she, “and most unkind of you to laugh at me.”

“By St. Denis, I’ll go and turn Trappist, or Carmelite, to-morrow,” cried one, “if only to pay you a visit in your convent.”

“I wish they’d accept me as almoner to your cloister, Mademoiselle,” said Breslot, the comedian, “I’m getting tired of serious parts, and would like a little light business.”

“Am I the style of thing for a superior, think ye?” said Jossard, the life of the “Français,” throwing over his head a lace scarf of one of the ladies, and assuming a demure look of indescribable drollery.

“How I should like to hear Mademoiselle recite those lines in your play of *Cecile*, Mons. Bertignac,” said a famous actress of tragedy. “Her face, figure, voice, and air, are perfect for them. I mean the farewell the novice takes of her sister, as day is just breaking, and the distant bells of the cloister announce the approach of the ceremony.”

"Where's the book?—who has it?" called out three or four together.

"The copies have been all seized by the police," said one. "Bertignac was suspected of a covert satire on the authorities."

"Or they have been bought up for distribution by the Society of *Bons Livres*," said another; "and Bertignac is to be made Gentleman of the Pope's Antechamber."

"Here is one, however, fortunately rescued," said Mdlle. Mars, producing the volume, which Jossard quickly snatched from her, and began, in pompous tones, reciting the lines, beginning—

"*Sœur de mon enfance, si je te quitte pour toujours.*"

"An abominable line," cried one; "and perfectly impossible to give without a bassoon accompaniment for the last word."

"The epithet too is downright nonsense. Why sister of her infancy?—did she cease to be so as she grew up?" said another.

"I wrote the lines after supping with Breslot," said the author. "One is not accountable for words uttered in moments of debility and hunger."

"Be the lines what they may, let us hear Mdlle. read them," said Talma; "and I mistake greatly, but with all our studied accuracy, we shall learn something from one whose nature is not bound by our trammels."

To have ventured on such a task, before such an audience, was more than Margot could dare to contemplate, and she grew faint and sick at the bare thought. They were not, however, of that mould which listens to excuses and refusals. The great familiarity which existed amongst them excluded all deference to individual likings or dislikings, and if servants of the public on the stage, off the boards they were the slaves of each other. Margot, almost lifeless with terror, was therefore obliged to comply. At first the words fell from her lips almost inaudibly; by degrees her voice gained strength, and only a tremulous accent betrayed the struggle within her. But, at last, when she came to the part where the nun, as if asking herself whether the world and its fascinations had taken no hold upon her heart, confesses, with a burst of spirit-wrung misery, that it was so, and that to leave that joyous sunlight for the gloomy sepulchre of the cloister, was worse than death itself, her utterance grew full and strong, her dark eyes flashed, her colour

heightened, her bosom heaved, and she gave the passage with such a burst of thrilling eloquence, that the last words were drowned in thunders of applause, only hushed as they beheld her fall back fainting, and perfectly overcome by her emotions.

"And you think you can take the veil, child?" asked Mdlle. Mars, when they were alone.

But Margot made no answer.

"You believe, Margot, that it will be possible for you to stifle within you feelings such as these, and that the veil and the cord can change your nature? No, no! If the heart be not dead, it is cruelty to bury it. Yours is not so, and shall have another destiny."

Mdlle. Mars at once communicated with the old Marquis, and endeavoured to dissuade him from his purpose regarding his grand-daughter; but he would not listen to her arguments, nor heed her counsels. At first, indeed, he could not be brought to believe that Margot herself could concur in them. It seemed incredible to him, that a child of his house could so far forget her station and self-respect as to avow herself unequal to any sacrifice or any trial, much less one in itself the noblest and the highest of all martyrdom.

"You will see," cried he eagerly, "that it is you—not I—have mistaken her. These gauds of the fashionable world have no real attraction for her. Her heart is within those walls, where, in a few days more, she will herself be for ever. She shall come and tell you so with her own lips."

He sent a servant to call her, but she was not to be found! He searched everywhere, but in vain. Margot was gone! From that day forth she was not to be met with. No means were spared in prosecuting the search. Mdlle. Mars herself, deeply afflicted at any inducements she might have held forth to her, joined eagerly in the pursuit, but to no end.

"But you cannot mean, Abbé," said I, as he completed the narrative, "that to this very hour no trace of her has been discovered?"

"I will not say so much," said he, "for once or twice tidings have reached her friends, that she was well and happy. The career she had chosen, she well knew would be regarded by her family as a deep degradation; and she only said to one who saw her, 'Tell them that their name shall not be dishonoured. As for her who bears it, she deems herself ennobled by the stage!' She was in Italy when last heard of, and in the Italian theatres; and in some of Alfieri's pieces had earned the most triumphant successes. Poor girl; from her very cradle

her destiny marked her for misfortune. What a mockery, then, these triumphs if she but recalls the disgrace by which they are purchased!"



CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE GLOOMIEST PASSAGE OF ALL.

SHALL I own that Margot's story affected me in a very different manner from what the good Abbé had intended it should? I could neither sympathize with the outraged pride of the old Marquis, the offended dignity of family, nor with the insulted honour of the sacred vocation she had abandoned. My reflections took a very different form, and turned entirely upon the dangers of the career she had adopted—perils which, from what I could collect of her character, were extremely likely to assail her. She was young, beautiful, gifted, and ambitious; and, above all, she was friendless. What temptations would not assail her—by what flatteries would she not be beset! Would she be endowed with strength to resist these? Would the dignity of her ancient descent guard her, or would the enthusiasm for her art protect her? These were questions that I could not solve, or rather, I solved them in many and different ways. For a long time had she occupied a great share in my heart; sometimes I felt towards her as towards a sister. I thought of the hours we had passed side by side over our books—now working hard and eagerly, now silent and thoughtful, as some train of ideas would wile us away from study, and leave us forgetful of even each other—till a chance word, a gesture, a sigh, would recall us—and then, interchanging our confessions, for such they were, we turned to our books again. But at other times, I thought of her as one dearer still than this—as of one to win whose praise I would adventure anything—whose chance words lingered in my memory, suggestive of many a hope, and, alas! many a fear! It is no graceful reflection to dwell upon, however truthful, that our first loves are the emanations of our self-esteem. They who first teach us to be heroes to our own hearts are our earliest idols. Ay, and with all the

changes and chances of life, they have their altars within us to our latest years. Why should it not be so? What limit ought there to be to our gratitude to those who first suggested noble ambitions, high-soaring thoughts, and hopes of a glorious future—who instilled in us our first pride of manhood, and made us seem worthy of being loved!

Margot had done all this for me when but a child, and now she was a woman, beautiful and gifted! The fame of her genius was world-wide. Did she still remember me?—had she ever a thought for the long past hours when we walked hand-in-hand together, or sat silently in some summer arbour? I recalled all that she had ever said to me, in consolation of the past, or with hope for the future. I pondered over little incidents, meaningless at the time, but now full of their own strong significance; and I felt at last assured that, when she had spoken to me of ambitious darings and high exploits, she had been less exhorting me than giving utterance to the bursting feelings of her own adventurous spirit.

Her outbreaks of impatience—her scarcely suppressed rebellion against the dull ritual of our village life—her ill-disguised suspicion of priestly influence, now rose before me; and I could see, that the flame which had burst forth at last, had been smouldering for many a year within her. I could remember, too, the temper, little short of scorn, in which she saw me devote myself to Jesuit readings, and labour hard at the dry tasks the Sister Ursule had prescribed for me. And yet then all my ambitions were of the highest and noblest. I could have braved any dangers, or met any perils, in the career of a missionary! Labour, endurance, suffering, martyrdom itself, had no terror for me. How was it that this spirit did not touch her heart? Were all her sympathies so bound up with the world that every success was valueless that won no favour with mankind? Had she no test for nobility of soul save in recognition of society? When I tried to answer these questions, I suddenly bethought me of my own shortcomings. Where had this ambition led me—what were its fruits? Had I really pursued the proud path I once tracked out for myself?—or, worse thought again, had it no existence whatever? Were devotion, piety, and single-heartedness, nothing but imposition, hypocrisy, and priestcraft?—Were the bright examples of missionary enterprise only cheats?—were all the narratives of their perilous existence but deception and falsehood? My latter experiences of life had served little to exalt the world in my esteem. I had far more frequently come into contact with corruption than

with honesty. My experiences were all those of fraud and treachery—of such, too, from men that the world reputed as honourable and high-minded. There was but one step more, and that a narrow one, to include the priest in the same category with the layman, and deem them all alike rotten and corrupted. I must acknowledge that the Abbé himself gave no contradiction to this unlucky theory. Artful and designing always, he scrupled at nothing to attain an object, and could employ a casuistry to enforce his views far more creditable to his craft than to his candour. I was no stranger to the arts by which he thought to entrap myself. I saw him condescend to habits and associates the very reverse of those he liked, in the hope of pleasing me; and even when narrating the story of Margot's fall—for such he called it—I saw him watching the impression it produced upon me, and canvassing, as it were, the chances, that here at length might possibly be found the long-wished-for means of obtaining influence over me.

"I do not ask of you," said he, as he concluded, "to see all these things as I see them. You knew them in their days of poverty and downfall; you have seen them the inhabitants of an humble village, leading a life of obscurity and privation; their very pretension to rank and title a thing to conceal; their ancient blood a subject of scorn and insult. But I remember the Marquis de Nipernois, a haughty noble in the haughtiest court of Europe; I have seen that very Marquis receiving royalty on the steps of his own chateau, and have witnessed his days of greatness and grandeur."

"True," said I, "but even with due allowance for all this, I cannot regard the matter in the same light that you do. To my eyes, there is no such dignity in the life of a nun, nor any such disgrace in that of an actress."

I said this purposely in the very strongest terms I could employ, to see how he would reply to it.

"And you are right, Gervois," said he, laying his hand affectionately on mine. "You are right. Genius and goodness can ennoble any station, and there are few places where such qualities exert such influence as the stage."

I suffered him to continue without interruption in this strain, for every word he spoke served to confirm me in my suspicion of his dishonesty. Mistaking the attention with which I listened for an evidence of conviction, he enlarged upon the theme, and ended at last by the conclusion, that to judge of Margot's actions fairly, we should first learn her motives.

"Who can tell," said he, "what good she may not have

proposed to herself!—by what years of patient endurance and study—by what passages of suffering and sorrow she may have planned some great and good object. It is a narrow view of life that limits itself to the day we live in. They who measure their station by the task they perform, and not by its results on the world at large, are but short-sighted mortals; and it is thus I would speak to yourself, Gervois. You are dissatisfied with your path in life. You complain of it as irksome, and even ignoble. Have you never asked yourself, is not this mere egotism? Have I the right to think only of what suits me, and accommodates itself to my caprices? Are there no higher objects than my pleasure or my convenience? Is the great fabric of society of less account than my likings or dislikings? Am I the judge, too, of the influence I may exert over others, or how my actions may sway the destinies of mankind? None should be more able to apply these facts than yourself—you that, in a rank of which you were, I must say unjustly, ashamed, and yet were oftentimes in possession of secrets on which thrones rested and dynasties endured.”

He said much more in the same strain; some of his observations being true and incontestable, and others the mere outpouring of his crafty and subtle intellect. They both alike fell unheeded by me now. Enough for me that I had detected, or fancied I had detected, him. I listened only from curiosity, and as one listens for the last time.

Yes! I vowed to myself that this should be our last meeting. I could not descend to the meanness of dissimulation, and affect a friendship I did not feel; nor could I expose myself to the chances of a temptation which assailed me in so many shapes and forms. I resolved, therefore, that I would not again visit the Abbé; and my only doubt was, whether I should not formally declare my determination.

He had ceased to speak; and I sat, silently pondering this question in my own mind. I forgot that I was not alone, and was only conscious of my error when I looked up and saw his small and deep-set eyes firmly fixed upon me.

“Well, be it so, Gervois,” said he, calmly; “but let us part friends.”

I started, and felt my face and forehead burning with a sudden flush of shame. There are impulses that sway us sometimes stronger than our reason; but they are hurricanes that pass away quickly, and leave the bark of our destiny to sail on its course unswervingly.

“You’ll come back to me one of these days, and I will be

just as ready to say, 'Welcome!' as I now say 'Good-bye! good-bye!'" and, sorrowfully repeating the last word as he went, he waved his hand to me, and withdrew.

For a moment I wished to follow him, to say I know not what; but calmer thoughts prevailed, and I left the house, and wandered homewards. That same evening I sent in my demand of resignation, and the next morning came the reply according it. My first thought was a joyful sense of liberty and freedom from a bondage I had long rebelled against; my next was a dreary consciousness of my helpless and friendless condition in life. I opened my little purse upon the table, and spread out its contents before me. There were seven pounds and a few shillings. A portion of my salary was still due to me, but now I would have felt it a degradation to claim it, so odious had the career become in my eyes.

I began to think over the various things for which my capacity might fit me. They seemed a legion when I stood in no need of them, and yet none now rose to my mind, without some almost impassable barrier. I knew no art nor handicraft. My habits rendered me unequal to daily labour with my hands. I knew many things en amateur, but not as an artist. I could ride, draw, fence, and had some skill in music, but in not one of these could I compete with the humblest of those who taught them. Foreign languages, too, I could speak, read, and write well; but of any method to communicate their knowledge I had not the vaguest conception. After all, these seemed my best acquirements, and I determined to try and teach them.

With this resolve I went out and spent two pounds of my little capital in books. It was a scanty library, but I arrayed it on a table next my window with pride and satisfaction. I turned over the leaves of my dictionary with something of the feeling with which a settler in a new region of the globe might have wandered through his little territory.

My grammars I regarded as mines whose ores were to enrich me; and my well-thumbed copy of *Telemachus*, and an odd volume of Lessing's comedies, were in themselves stores of pleasure and amusement. I suppose it is a condition of the human mind that makes our enjoyment in the ratio of the sacrifices they have cost us. I know of myself, that since that day I now speak of, it has been my fortune to be wealthy, to possess around me every luxury my wish could compass, and yet I will own it, that I have never gazed on the well-filled shelves of a costly library replete with every comfort, with a

tithe of the satisfaction I then contemplated the two or three dog-eared volumes that lay before me.

My first few days of liberty were passed in planning out the future. I studied the newspapers in hope of meeting something adapted to my capacity; but though in appearance no lack of these, I invariably found some fatal obstacle intervened to prevent my success. At one place, the requirements were beyond my means; at another, the salary was insufficient for bare support; and at one I remember my functions of teacher were to be united with menial offices against which my pride revolted. I resolved to adventure at last, and opened a little school—an evening school for those whose occupations made the day too valuable to devote any part of it to education.

At the end of some five weeks I had three pupils; hard-working and hard-worked men they were, who steadily bent upon advancement in life, now entered upon a career of labour far greater than all they had ever encountered.

Two were about to emigrate, and their studies were geography, with some natural history, and whatever I could acquire for them of information about the resources of a certain portion of Upper Canada. The third was a weaver, and desired to learn French, in order to read the works of French mathematicians, at that time sparingly translated into English. He was a man of superior intellect, and capable of a high cultivation, but poor to the very last degree. The thirst for knowledge had possessed him exactly as the passion for gambling lays hold of some other men. He lived for nothing else. The defeats and difficulties he encountered but served to brace him to further efforts, and he seemed to forget all his privations and his poverty, in the aim of his glorious pursuit.

To keep in advance of him in his knowledge, I found impossible. All that I could do was to aid him in acquiring French, which, strange to say, presented great difficulties to him. He, however, made me a partaker of his own enthusiasm, and I worked hard and long at pursuits for which my habits of mind and thought little adapted me. I need scarcely say, that all this time my worldly wealth made no progress. My scholars were very poor themselves, and the pittance I earned from them I had oftentimes to refuse accepting. Each day showed my little resources growing smaller, and my hopes held out no better prospect for the future.

Was I to struggle on thus to the last, and sink under the pressure, was now the question that kept perpetually rising to my mind. My poverty had now descended to actual misery; my

clothes were ragged; my shoes scarcely held together; more than once an entire day would pass without my breaking my fast.

I lost all zest for life, and wandered about in lonely and unfrequented places, in a half-dreamy state, too vague to be called melancholy. My mind, at this time, vacillated between a childish timidity and a species of almost savage ferocity. At some moments tears would steal along my cheeks, and my heart vibrated to the very finest emotions; at others, I was possessed with an almost demoniac fierceness, that seemed only in search of some object to wreak its vengeance upon. A strange impression, however, haunted me through both these opposite states, and this was, that my life was menaced by some one or other, and that I went in hourly peril of assassination. This sense of danger impressed me with either a miserable timidity, or a reckless, even an insolent intrepidity.

By degrees, all other thoughts were merged in this one, and every incident, no matter how trifling, served to strengthen and confirm it. Fortunately for my reader I have no patience to trace out the fancies by which I was haunted. I imagined that kings and emperors were in the conspiracy against me, and that cabinets only plotted how to entrap me. I sold the last remnant of my wardrobe, and my few remaining books, and quitted my dwelling, to forsake it again for another, after a few days. Grim want was, at length, before me, and I found myself one morning—it was a cold one of December—with only a few pence remaining. It chanced to be one of my days of calmer temperament; for some previous ones I had been in a state bordering on frenzy; and now the reaction had left me weak and depressed, but reasonable.

I went over, to myself, as well as I was able, all my previous life: I tried to recall the names of the few with whom my fate seemed to connect me, and of whose whereabouts I knew nothing; I canvassed in my own mind how much might be true of these stories which I used to hear of my birth and parentage, and whether the whole might not possibly have been invented to conceal some darker history. Such doubts had possibly not assailed me in other times; but now, with broken hopes and shattered strength, they took a bold possession of me. I actually possessed nothing which might serve to confirm my pretension to station. Documents or papers I had none; nor was there, so far as I knew, a living witness to bear testimony to my narrative. In pondering thus I suddenly remembered that, in the letter which I once had addressed to

Mr. Pitt, were enclosed some few memoranda in corroboration of my story. What they were exactly, and to what extent they went, I could not recall to memory; but it was enough that they were, in some shape, evidences of that which already, to my own mind, was assuming the character of a delusion.

To this faint chance, I now attached myself with a last effort of desperation. Some clue might possibly be found in these papers to guide my search, and my whole thoughts were now bent upon obtaining them. With this object I sat down and wrote a few most respectful lines to the minister, stating the nature of my request, and humbly excusing myself for the intrusion on his attention. A week passed over—a week of almost starvation—and yet no reply reached me. I now wrote again more pressingly than before, adding that my circumstances did not admit of delay; and that if, by any mischance, the papers had been lost or mislaid, I still would entreat his excellency's kindness to—I believe I said recall what he could remember of these documents, and thus supply the void left by their loss. This letter shared the same fate as my former one. I wrote a third time, I knew not in what terms, for I wrote late at night, after a day of mad and fevered impatience. I had fasted for nigh two entire days. An intense thirst never ceased to torture me; and as I wandered wildly here and there, my state alternated between fits of cold shuddering, and a heat that seemed to be burning my very vitals. The delusions of that terrible interval were, doubtless, the precursors of actual madness. I bethought me of every torture I had ever heard of—of all the sufferings martyrdom had ever borne, but to which death came at last as the comforter; but to me no such release seemed possible. I felt as though I had done all that should invoke it. “Want—sickness—suffering—despair—are these not enough,” I asked myself—“must guilt and self-murder be added to the terrible list?” And it was, I remember, with a kind of triumphant pride, I determined against this. “If mankind reject me,” said I—“if they make of me an outcast and a victim, on them shall lie all the shame and all the sin. Enough for me the misery—I will not have the infamy of my death!”

I have said I wrote a third letter; and to make sure of its coming to hand, I walked with it to Hounslow. The journey occupied me more than half the night, for it was day when I arrived. I delivered it into the hands of a servant, and saying that I should wait for the answer, I sat down upon a stone bench beside the door. Overcome with fatigue, and utterly

exhausted, I fell off asleep—a sound and, strange to say, delicious sleep, with calm and pleasant dreams. From this I was aroused by a somewhat rude shake, and on looking up saw that a considerable number of persons were around me.

“Stand up, my good fellow,” cried a man who, though in plain clothes and unarmed, proclaimed by his manner of command that he was in authority; “stand up, if you please.”

I made an effort to obey, but sank down again upon the bench, faint and exhausted.

“He wants a drink of water,” cried one.

“He wants summut to eat—that’s what he wants,” said a labouring man in front of me.

“We’ll take him where he’ll be properly looked after,” said the first speaker. “Just stand back, good people, and leave me to deal with him.” The crowd retired as he spoke, while, coming nearer, he bent down towards me and said—“Is your name Paul Gervois?”

“I have gone by that name,” I replied.

“And is this in your handwriting?—mind, you needn’t say so if you don’t like; I only ask the question out of curiosity.”

“Yes,” said I, eagerly; “what does Mr. Pitt say?—what reply does he make me?”

“Oh, you’ll hear all that time enough. Just try now if you couldn’t come along with me as far as the road; I’ve a carriage there a-waiting.”

I did my best to rise, but weakness again overcame me, and I could only stammer out a few faint words of excuse.

“Don’t you see that the man is dying?” said some one, half indignantly, but the constable—for such he was—made some rough answer, and then stooping down he passed his arm round me, and lifted me to my feet at once. As he half carried, half pushed me along, I tried to obtain an answer to my former question, “What reply had the minister made me?”

“You’ll know all that time enough, my good friend,” was all the answer I could obtain, as, assisting me into the carriage, he took his place at my side, and gave the word to proceed “to town.”

Not a word passed between us as we went along; for my part, I was too indifferent to life itself to care whither he was conducting me, or with what object. As well as utter listlessness would permit me to think, I surmised that I had been arrested. Is it not a strange confession, that I felt a sense of pleasure in the thought that I had not been utterly forgotten by the world, and that my existence was recognised, even at the cost of an

accusation. I conclude that to understand this feeling on my part, one must have been as forlorn and desolate as I was. I experienced neither fear nor curiosity as to what might be the charge against me; nor was my indifference that of conscious innocence—it was pure carelessness!

I slept that night in a prison, and ate of prison fare—ravenously and eagerly too; so much so, that the turnkey, compassionating me, fetched me some of his own supper to satisfy my cravings. I awoke the next day with a gnawing sense of hunger, intensely painful, far more so than my former suffering from want. That day, and I believe the two following ones, I spent in durance, and at last was conveyed in the prison-cart to the office of a magistrate.

The court was densely crowded, but the cases called seemed commonplace and uninteresting—at least so they appeared to me, as I tried in vain to follow them. At length the crier called out the name of Paul Gervois, and it was less the words than the directed looks of the vast assembly, as they all turned towards me, showed that I was the representative of that designation.

My sense of shame at this moment prevented my observing accurately what went forward; but I soon rallied, and perceived that my case was then before the court, and my accuser it was who then addressed the bench.

The effort to follow the speaker, to keep up with the narrative that fell from his lips, was indescribably painful to me. I can compare my struggle to nothing save the endeavour of one with a shattered limb to keep pace with the step of his unwounded comrades. The very murmurs of indignation that at times stirred the auditory, increased this feeling to a kind of agony. I knew that it was all-important I should hear and clearly understand what was said, and yet my faculties were unequal to the effort.

The constable who arrested me came forward next, and spoke as to the few words which passed between us, affirming how I had confessed to a certain letter as being written by myself, and that I alone was to be held responsible for its contents. When he left the table, the judge called on me for my defence. I stared vaguely from side to side, and asked to what charge?

“You have been present, prisoner, during the whole of this examination, and have distinctly heard the allegation against you,” replied he. “The charge is for having written a threatening letter to one of his Majesty’s ministers of state; a letter which in itself constitutes a grave offence, but is seriously

aggravated, as being part of a long pursued system of intimidation, and enforced by menaces of the most extreme violence."

I was now suddenly recalled to a clearness of comprehension, and able to follow him, as he detailed how a certain Mr. Conway—the private secretary of the minister—proved the receipt of the letter in question, as well as two others in the same hand. The last of these—which constituted the chief allegation against me—was then read aloud; and anything more abominable and detestable it would be hard to conceive. After recapitulating a demand for certain documents—so vaguely worded as to seem a mere invented and trumped-up request—it went to speak of great services unrewarded, and honourable zeal not only neglected but persecuted. From this—which so far possessed a certain degree of coherency and reason—it suddenly broke off into the wildest and most savage menaces. It spoke of one, who held life so cheaply, that he felt no sacrifice in offering it up for the gratification of his vengeance.

"Houseless, friendless, and starving; without food, without a name—for you have robbed me of even that—I have crawled to your door to avenge myself and die!"

Such were the last words of this epistle; and they ring in my ears even yet, with shame and horror.

"I never uttered such sentiments as these—words like those never escaped me!" cried I, in an agony of indignation.

"There is the letter," said the magistrate; "do you deny having written it?"

"It is mine—it is in my own hand," muttered I, in a voice scarcely audible; and I had to cling to the dock to save myself from falling.

Of what followed I know nothing—absolutely nothing. There seemed to be a short debate and discussion of some kind; and I could catch, here and there, some chance phrase or word that sounded compassionately towards me. At last I heard the magistrate say,—

"If you tell me, Mr. Conway, that Mr. Pitt does not wish to press the charge, nor do more than protect himself from future molestation, I am willing to admit the prisoner to bail—good and sufficient bail—for his conduct hereafter. In default of of this, however, I shall feel bound to commit him."

Again some discussion ensued, terminated by some one asking me if I could produce the required securities.

By this time a slight reaction to my state of debility had set in—that fevered condition in which passion assumed the ascendant; and I answered, haughtily,—

"Bail for whom? Is it for him to whom they refused bread that they will go surety? Look at these rags, sir—see these wasted arms—hear this voice, hoarse as it is with hunger—and ask yourself who could pledge himself for such misery?"

He uttered some commonplaces—at least so they sounded to me—about there being no necessary connection between want and crime; but I stopped him short, saying,—

"Then you have never fasted, sir—never known what it was to struggle against the terrible temptations that arise in a famished heart; to sink down upon a bed of straw, and think of the thousands at that moment in affluence, and think of them with hate! No link between want and crime! None, for they are one. Want is envy—want is malice. Its evil counsellors are everywhere—in the plash of the wave at midnight—in the rustle of the leaves in a dark wood—in the chamber of the sick man; wherever guilt can come, a whispering voice will say, 'be there!'"

Some friendly by-stander here counselled me to calm myself, and not aggravate my position by words of angry impatience. The air of sympathy touched me, and I said no more.

I was committed to prison—remanded, I believe they said—to be called up at some future day, when further inquiries had been made into my mode of life and habits. The sentence—so well as I could understand it—was not a severe one—imprisonment, without labour or any other penalty. I was told that I had reason to be grateful! but gratitude was then at a low ebb within me; for whatever moralists may say, it is an emotion that never thrives on misery. As I was led away, I overheard some comments that were passed upon me. One called me mad, and pitied me; another said I was a practised impostor, far too leniently dealt with; a third classed me with the vile herd of those who live by secret crimes, and hoped for some stringent act against such criminals.

There was not one to ask, Why has he done this thing, and how shall others be saved from his example?

They who follow me with looks of contempt and aversion never guessed that the prison was to me a grateful home; that if the strong door shut out liberty, it excluded starvation too, and that if I could not stray at will through the green lanes, yet my footsteps never bore me to the darksome pond, where the black depth whispered—oblivion!



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE STREETS.

I WAS liberated from prison at the end of eight days. I begged hard to be allowed to remain there, but was not permitted. This interval, short as it was, had done much to recruit my strength and rally my faculties; it served besides to instil into me a calm and patient resolve to depend solely on myself; and effacing, so far as I might, all hopes of tracing out my family, I determined now to deem no labour too humble by which I might earn a livelihood.

I am now speaking of fifty years ago, and the world has made rapid strides since that. The growing necessities of our great population, and the wide field for enterprise offered by our colonies, have combined to produce a social revolution few could have predicted once. The well born and the tenderly-nurtured have now gone forth in thousands to try their fortunes in far away lands, to brave hardships and encounter toil that the hard sons of labour themselves are fain to shrink from; but at the time I speak of this bold spirit had not burst into life—the world was insolent in its prosperity, and never dreamed of a reverse.

By transcribing letters and papers for one of the officials, while in jail, I had earned four shillings, and with this sum, my all in the world, I now found myself following the flood-tide of that host which moves daily along the Strand in London. I had breakfasted heartily before I left the prison, and resolving to hoard up my little treasure, determined to eat nothing more on that day. As I walked along I felt that the air, sharp and frosty as it was, excited and invigorated me. The bright blue sky overhead, the clear outline of every object, the brisk stir and movement of the population, all helped to cheer my spirits, and I experienced a sense of freedom, as that of one who, having thrown off a long-carried burden, is at last free to walk unencumbered. A few hours before I fancied I could have been well satisfied to wear out life within the walls of my prison, but now I felt that liberty compensated for any hardship. The town on that morning presented an aspect of more than ordi-

nary stir and excitement. Men were at work in front of all the houses, on ladders and scaffoldings; huge frameworks, with gaudy paintings, were being hoisted from the roofs, and signs of wonderful preparation of one kind or other were everywhere visible. I stopped to inquire the meaning, and was told, not without a stare of surprise, that London was about to illuminate in joyful commemoration of the treaty of peace just signed with France. I thanked my informant, and moved on. Assuredly there were few in either country who had less reason to be interested in such tidings than myself. I possessed nothing, not even a nationality, that I could safely lay claim to. In the hope of approaching prosperity to-morrow, so forcibly expressed in many an inscription—in all those devices of enthusiastic patriotism, I had no share. In fact, I was like one of another nation, suddenly dropped in the midst of a busy population, whose feelings, hopes, and aspirations were all new and strange to me.

As I came up to Charing Cross a dense crowd stopped the way, gazing with wondering eyes at a great triumphal arch, which spanned the thoroughfare, and whose frail timbers gave but a sorry intimation of the splendour it should exhibit after night-fall. Immense draperies floated from this crazy framework, and vast transparencies displayed in tasteless allegory the blessings of a peace. The enthusiasm of admiration was high among the spectators; doubtless, the happy occasion itself suggested a cordiality of approval that the preparations themselves did not warrant; for at every step in the construction, a hearty cheer would burst forth from the crowd in recognition of the success of the work. My attention, undisturbed by such emotions, was fixed upon one of the poles of the scaffolding, which, thrown considerably out of its perpendicular, swayed and bent at every step that approached it, and threatened, if not speedily looked to, to occasion some disaster. I pointed this out to one beside me, who as quickly communicated it to another, and in less than a minute after, a panic cry was raised that the scaffold was falling. The crowd fell back in terror, while the men upon the scaffolding, not knowing in what quarter the danger existed, stood in terrified groups, or madly rushed to the ladders to escape. The mad shouts and screams of those beneath added to the confusion, and rendered it impossible to convey warning to those in peril. At this instant a man was seen approaching the weak part of the scaffold, and though at every step he took, the ill-fated pole swerved further and further from the right line, he was utterly unconscious of his

danger, and seemed only bent on gaining a rope, which, fastened by one end above, hung down to the porch beneath. Wild cries and yells were raised to warn him of his peril, but not heeding, nor, perhaps, hearing them, he seized the cord and swung himself free of the scaffold.

In an instant the fabric gave way, and, bending over, came down with a terrible crash of falling beams and splintered timber. It fell so close to where I stood, that it struck down an old man with whom I had been conversing the moment before. Strangely too, amidst that dense throng, this was the only serious injury inflicted; but he was struck dead—at least he only lingered for the few minutes it took to carry him to a neighbouring public-house, where he expired.

"It's old Harry; he always said he'd die at his crossing," said the publican, as he recognized the features.

"He thought it was them new-fashioned curricles would do for him, though," said another. "He said so to me last week, for he was getting too old to escape when he saw them coming."

"Old! I should think he was. He was on that there crossing at the coronation—a matter of fifty years ago."

"Say forty, my good friend, and you'll be nigher the mark; but even forty sufficed to leave him well off for the rest of his days, if he had but had prudence to know it."

As I stood thus listening, I leaned upon the broom which I had taken from the old man's hand when I lifted him up.

"I'll give you a matter of ten pounds for it, master," said a gruff-looking fellow, addressing me, while he touched the broom with his knuckle. "Five down on the nail, and the rest ten shillings a-week. Do you say done?" Before I could collect myself to understand what this offer might mean, a dozen others were crowding around me with a number of similar proposals.

"You don't know the rule amongst these fellows," said the landlord, addressing me; "but it is this, that whoever touches the broom first after its owner is killed, succeeds to the crossing. It's yours now, to work or dispose of, as you like best."

"He'll never work it—he doesn't know the town," said one.

"He'd not know Charley Fox from Big Hullecoat the tailor."

"He'd splash Colonel Hanyer, and sweep clean for the Duke of Queensberry."

"And forget to have change for Lord Bute," cried another—a sally so generally applauded, that it showed a full appreciation of its truthfulness.

"I'll try it, nevertheless, gentlemen," said I, addressing the company respectfully; "and if the landlord will only give me credit for half-a-guinea's worth of liquor, we'll drink my accession to office at once."

This was agreeably received by all, even the landlord, who ushered us into an inner room to enjoy ourselves.

If I had not transgressed too freely already on my reader's patience by details which have no immediate bearing on my own life, I should have been greatly tempted to revive some recollections of that evening—one of the strangest I ever passed. Assuredly the guild of which I suddenly found myself a member was not one in which I could have either expected laws and regulations, or looked for anything like a rigid etiquette; yet such was precisely the case. The rules, if not many, were imperative, while the requirements to obtain success were considerable. It was not enough to know every remarkable character about town, but you should also have a knowledge of their tone and temper. Some should be dunned with impurity; others never asked for a farthing; a Scotch accent went far with General Dundas; a jest never failed with Mr. Sheridan. Besides this, an unfailing memory for every one who had crossed during the day was indispensable, and if this gift extended to chairs and coaches, all the better was it.

My brethren, I must do them the justice to say, were no niggards of information. To me, perhaps, they felt a sense of exultation in describing the dignity of the craft—perhaps they hoped to deter me from a career so surrounded with difficulties. They little knew that they were only stimulating the curiosity of one to whom any object or any direction in life was a boon and a blessing. Hardship and neglect had so far altered my appearance, that, even had I cared for it, any artificial disguisement was unnecessary. My beard and moustache covered the lower part of my face, and my hair, long and lank, hung heavily on my neck behind. But, were it otherwise, how few had ever known me! There were none to blush for me—none to feel implicated in what they might have called the disgrace of my position. I reasoned thus—I went even further, and persuaded myself there was something akin to heroism in thus braving the current of opinion, and stemming the strong tide of the world's prejudice. If this be my fitting station in life, thought I, there is no impropriety in my abiding by it; and if, per-

chance, I might have worthily filled a higher one, the disgrace is not with me, but with that world that treated me so harshly.

Though all these arguments satisfied me thoroughly as I thought over them, they did not give me the support I had hoped for. When the hour came for me to assume my calling, I am almost ashamed to say how I shrunk from it. I grieve to think how much more easy for me had it been to commit a crime, than to go forth, broom in hand, and earn my livelihood! But I was determined to go on, and I did so. The first week or so was absolute misery; I scarcely dared to look any one in the face. If perchance, I caught an eye fixed upon me, I imagined I was recognized. I dreaded to utter a word, lest my voice might betray me. I was repeatedly questioned about old Harry, and what had become of him; and I could see, that with all my attempts at disguise, my accent attracted attention, and men looked at me with curiosity, and even suspicion. Is it not strange that there should be more real awkwardness in maintaining a station that one deems below him, than in the assumption of a rank as unquestionably above his own? Perhaps our self-love is the cause of it, and that, in our estimate of our own natures, we think nothing too great or too exalted for us!

Be this as it may, my struggles were very painful; and, far from conforming easily to the exigencies of my lot, each day's experience rendered them still harder to me. Two entire days passed over without my having received a farthing. I could not bring myself to ask for payment, and the crowd passed on unheeding me. Some who seemed prepared with the accustomed mite replaced it in their pockets, when they saw what seemed my indifference. One young fellow threw me a penny as he went, but I could not have stooped for it, had my life been on the issue. What a wonderful thing is fortune!—or rather, how rarely can we plot for ourselves any combination of circumstances so successful as those that arise from what we deem accident! These that seemed evidences of failure were the first promises of prosperity. My comrades had given me the nickname of "Gentleman Jack." The sobriquet attracted notice to me, and to my habit of never making a demand; and long ere I came to learn the cause, I found myself deriving all the advantage of it. Few now went by without paying; many gave me silver, some even accompanying the gift with a passing salutation, or a word of recognition. Slight as these were, and insignificant, they were far more precious to me than any praises I have ever listened to in my days of prosperity!

I gradually came to know all the celebrities of the town, and be myself known by them. How like a dream does it seem to me, as I think over those days! When Alderman Whitbread would give me a shilling, and Wilkes borrow a crown of me; when Colonel O'Kelly would pay me with a wink, and Sir Philip Francis with a curse; when Baron Geramb, frizzed, mustached, and decorated, lounged lazily along on the arm of Admiral Payne, followed by a gorgeously-equipped chasseur, a rare sight in those days. Nor is it altogether an old man's prejudice makes me think that the leaders of fashion in those times had more unmistakably the signs of being Grand Seigneurs than the men of our own day.

I have said that the tide of fortune had turned with me, and to an extent scarcely credible. Many days saw my gains above a guinea; once or twice they more than doubled that amount. I have frequently read in newspapers announcements of the fortunes accumulated by men in the very humblest stations—statements which, with less experience than my own, I might have hesitated to believe; but now I know them to be credible. I know, too, that many of the donors who contemptuously threw their penny as they passed, were far poorer than the recipient of their bounty.

If time did not reconcile me to my lot, yet a certain hardihood to brave destiny in any shape fortified, me. I reasoned repeatedly with myself on this wise.—Fate can scarcely have anything lower in store for me; from this there can be no descent in fortune. If, then, I can here maintain within me the feelings which moved me in happier days, and live unchanged in the midst of what might have been degradation, there is yet a hope that I may emerge to hold a worthy station among my fellow-men.

I will not affirm that this feeling was not heightened by an almost resentful sense of the world's treatment of me—a feeling which, combat how I would, hourly gained more and more possession of me. To struggle against this growing misanthropy, I formed the resolve that I would devote all my earnings of each Sunday to charity. It was but too easy, in my walk of life, for me to know objects of want and suffering. The little close in which I lived—near Seven Dials—was filled with such; and amongst them I now dispensed the seventh of my gains; in reality far more, since Sunday almost equalled two entire days in profit. Thus did I vacillate betwixt good and evil influences—now yielding—now resisting—but always gaining some little advantage over selfishness, and narrow-minded-

ness, by the training of that best of teachers—adversity. How my trials might have ended, had the course of my life gone on uninterruptedly, I cannot even guess. Whether the bad might have gained the ascendant, or the good triumphed, I know not. An incident, too slight to advert to, save in its influence upon my fate, suddenly gave another direction to my destiny; and though, as I have said, in itself a mere trifle, yet for its singularity, as well as in its consequences, requires a mention; and shall have—albeit a short one—a chapter of its own.

The incident I am about to relate, has not—at least so far as I know—ever been made public. Up to three years ago, I could have called a witness to its truth; but I am now the only survivor of those who once could have corroborated my tale. Still I am not without hope, that there are some living who, having heard the circumstances before, will generously exonerate me from any imputation of being the inventor.

This preface may excite in my reader the false expectation of something deeply interesting; and I at once and most explicitly own that I have none such in store for him. It is, I repeat for the third time, an incident only curious from those engaged in it, and only claiming a mention in such a history as mine.



CHAPTER XXXIX.

A STRANGE INCIDENT TO BE A TRUE ONE.

IT was on one of the coldest of a cold December days, when a dry north wind, with a blackish sky, portended the approach of a heavy snow-storm, that I was standing at my usual post, with little to occupy me, for the weather for some time previous had been dry and frosty. Habit, and the security that none could recognize me, had at length inured me to my condition; and I was beginning to feel the same indifference about my station that I felt as to my future.

Pride may, in reality, have had much to say to this, for I was proud to think that of the thousands who flowed past me each day I could claim equality with a large share, and perhaps more than equality with many. This pride, too, was somehow fostered by a sense of hope, which I could have scarcely credited; for there constantly occurred to me the thought that one day or other I should be able to say—"Yes, my Lord Duke, I have known you these twenty years. I remember having swept the crossing for you in the autumn after the Peace. Ay, ay, Right Honourable Sir, I owe you my gratitude, if only for this, that you never passed me without saying, 'Good day, Jack.'"

Was it not strange, too, how fondly I clung to—what importance I attached to these little passing recognitions; they seemed to me the last remaining ties that bound me to my fellow-men, and that to deny them to me was to declare me an outcast for ever. To this hour I feel my thankfulness to those who thus acknowledged me; nor can I even yet conquer an unforgiving memory of some chance, mayhap unintentional, rudeness which, as it were, seemed to stamp my degradation more deeply upon me. Stranger still that I must own how my political bias was decided by these accidental causes; for while the great Tory leaders rarely or never noticed me, the Whigs—a younger and more joyous section in those times—always flung me a passing word, and would even occasionally condescend to listen to my repartee.

I must guard myself from giving way to the memories

which are already crowding fast about me. Names, and characters, and events rise up before my mind in myriads, and it is with difficulty I can refrain from embarking on that flood of the past which now sweeps along through my brain. The great, the high-born, the beautiful, the gifted, all dust and ashes now!—they who once filled the whole page of each day's history, utterly ignored and forgotten! It is scarcely more than fifty years ago, and yet of all the eloquence that shook the "House," of all the fascinations that stirred the hearts of princes, of the high ambitions that made men demigods in their time, how much have reached us? Nothing, or less than nothing. A jest or a witticism that must be read with a commentary, or told with an explanation—the repartee that set the table in a roar, now heard with a cold, half-contemptuous astonishment, or a vacant inquiry, "if such were really the wits of those times."

Amongst those with whose appearance I had become familiar were three young men of very fashionable exterior, who always were seen together. They displayed, by the dress of blue coat and buff waistcoat, the distinctive colours of the Whigs; but their buttons more emphatically declared their party in the letters P. F., by which the friends of the Prince then loved to designate themselves. The "Bucks" of that age had one enormous advantage over the Dandies of ours—they had no imitators. They stood alone and unapproachable in all the glories of tight leathers and low top-boots. No spurious copies of them got currency; and the man of fashion was unmistakable amongst a thousand. The three of whom I have made mention were good specimens of that school, which dated its birth from the early years of the Prince, and by their habits and tone imparted a distinctive character to the party. They dressed well, they looked well, they comported themselves as though life went ever pleasantly with them; and in their joyous air and easy bearing one might read the traits of a set well adapted to be the friends and companions of a young prince, himself passionately devoted to pleasure, and reckless in regard to its price.

I am now speaking of long ago, and have no hesitation in giving the real names of those to whom I allude. One was a captain in the navy called Payne; the second was a young colonel in the foot guards, Conway; and the third was an Irishman named O'Kelly, whom they called the Count, or the Chevalier about town, from what cause or with what pretension I never ascertained.

Even in my own narrow sphere of observation it was clear to me that this last exercised a great influence over his companions. The tone of his voice, his air, his every gesture bespoke a certain degree of dictation, to which the others seemed to lend a willing obedience. It was just that amount of superiority which a greater buoyancy of character confers—a higher grade of vitality some would call it; but which never fails through life to make itself felt and acknowledged. The three kept a bachelor house at Kensington, whose fame ran a close rivalry with that of the more celebrated Carlton House. O'Kelly lived below, Conway occupied the drawing-room story, and Payne the third floor; and with one or other of these all the great characters of the Opposition were constant guests. Here, amidst brilliant sallies of wit and loud bursts of laughter, the tactics of party were planned and conned over. While songs went round, and toasts were cheered, the subtle schemes of politics were discussed and determined on; and many a sudden diversion of debate, that seemed the accident of the moment, took its origin in some suggestion that arose in these wild orgies. The Prince himself was a frequent guest, since the character of these meetings allowed of many persons being admitted to his society whose birth and position might not have warranted their being received at his own table; and here also were many presented to him whose station could not have claimed a more formal introduction.

It was rumoured that these same meetings were wild and desperate orgies, in which every outrage on morality was practised, and that the spirit of libertinism raged without control or hindrance. I have not of myself any means of judging how far this statement might be correct, but I rather incline to believe it one of those calumnies which are so constantly levelled at any society which assumes to itself exclusiveness and secrecy. They who were admitted there assuredly were not given to divulge what they saw, and this very reserve must have provoked its interpretation.

A truce to these speculations; and now back to my story. I was standing listlessly on the edge of the flag-way, while a long funeral procession was passing. The dreary day, and drearier object, seemed to harmonize well together. The wheels of the mourning-coaches grated sorrowfully on the half-frozen ground, and the leaden canopy of sky appeared a suitable covering to the melancholy picture. My thoughts were of the very saddest, when suddenly a merry burst of laughing voices broke in upon my ear; and without turning my head, I recognized the

three young men of whom I have just spoken, as standing close behind me.

Some jocular allusion to the slow march of the procession had set them a-laughing; and O'Kelly said,—

"Talk as men will about the ills of life, see how tardily they move out of it."

"That comes of not knowing the road before them," cried Payne.

"Egad! they might remember, though, that it is a well-worn highway by this time," chimed in Conway; "and now that poor Dick has gone it, who's to fill his place?"

"No very hard matter," said O'Kelly. "Take every tenth fellow you'll meet from this to Temple-bar, and you'll have about the same kind of intelligence Harvey had. You gave him credit for knowing everything, whereas his real quality was knowing everybody."

"For that matter, so does Jack here," cried Conway.

"And capital company he'd be, too, I've no doubt," added Payne.

A moment of whispering conversation ensued; and O'Kelly said, half aloud,—

"I'll lay five hundred on it!"

"By Jove! I'll have no hand in it," said Conway.

"Nor I neither," chimed in Payne.

"Courageous allies both," said O'Kelly, laughing. "Happily I need not such aid—I'll do it myself. I only ask you not to betray me."

Without heeding the protestations they both poured forth, O'Kelly stepped forward, and whispered in my ear,—

"Will you dine with me to-morrow, Jack?"

I stared at him in silent astonishment, and he went on,—

"I have a wager on it; and if I win, you shall have five guineas for your share; and, to show you my confidence of success, I pay beforehand."

He opened his purse as he spoke; but I stopped him suddenly, with,—

"No need of that, sir. I accept your invitation. The honour alone is enough for me."

"But you must have a coat, Jack, and ruffles, man."

"I'll not disgrace you, sir—at least so far as appearance goes," said I.

He stared at me for a second or two, and then said,—

"By Jove! I was certain of it. Well, seven o'clock is the hour. Kensington—every one knows the Bird-Cage."

I touched my cap, and bowed. He gravely returned my salute, and walked on between his friends, whose loud laughter continued to ring out for a long way down the street.

My first impressions were, I own, the reverse of agreeable; and I felt heart-sick with shame for having accepted the invitation. The very burst of laughter told me in what point of view they regarded the whole incident. I was, doubtless, to be the ignoble instrument of some practical joke. At first I tortured my ingenuity to think how I could revenge myself for the indignity; but I suddenly remembered that I had made myself a willing party to the scheme, whatever it might be. I had agreed to avail myself of the invitation, and should, therefore, accept its consequences.

With what harrassing doubts did I rack my suffering brain. At one time, frenzied with the idea of an insult passed upon my wretchedness and poverty; at another, casuistically arguing myself into the belief that, whatever the offence to others, to me there could be none intended. But why revive the memory of a conflict which impressed me with all the ignominy of my station, and made me feel myself, as it were, selected for an affront that could not with impunity have been practised towards another?

I decided not to go, and then just as firmly determined I would present myself. My last resolve was to keep my promise—to attend the dinner-party; to accept, as it were in the fullest sense, the equality tendered to me; and, if I could detect the smallest insult, or even a liberty taken with me, to claim my right to resent it, by virtue of the act which admitted me to their society, and made me for the time their companion. I am not quite sure that such conduct was very justifiable. I half suspect that the easier and the better course would have been to avoid a situation in which there was nothing to be anticipated but annoyance or difficulty.

My mind once made up, I hastened to prepare for the event, by immediately ordering a handsome dress-suit. Carefully avoiding what might be deemed the impertinence of assuming the colours of party, I selected a claret-coloured coat, with steel buttons; a richly-embroidered waistcoat; and for my cravat one of French cambric, with a deep fall of Mechlin lace. If I mention matters so trivial, it is because at the time to which I refer the modes of dress were made not only to represent the sections of politics, but to distinguish between those who adhered to an antiquated school of breeding and manners, and those who now avowed themselves the disciples of a new teach-

ing. I wished, if possible, to avoid either extreme; and assumed the colours and the style usually worn by foreigners in English society. Like them, too, I wore a sword and buckles; for the latter I went to the extravagance of paying two guineas for the mere hire.

If you have ever felt in life, good reader, what it was to have awaited in anxious expectancy for the day of some great examination, whose issue was to have given the tone to all your future destiny, you may form some notion of the state of mental excitement in which I passed the ensuing twenty-four hours. It was to no purpose that I said to myself all that my reason could suggest or my ingenuity fancy; a certain instinct, stronger than reason, more convincing than ingenuity, told me that this was about to be an eventful moment of my life.

The hour at length arrived; the carriage that was to convey me stood at the door; and as I took a look at myself, full dressed and powdered, in the glass, I remember that my sensations vibrated between the exulting vanity and pride of a gallant about to set out for a fête, and the terrors of a criminal on his way to the block. My head grew more and more confused as I drove along. At moments I thought that all was a dream, and I tried to arouse and wake myself; then I fancied that it was the past was fictitious—that my poverty, my want, and my hardship were all imaginary—that my real condition was one of rank and affluence. I examined the rich lace of my ruffles, the sparkling splendour of my sword-knot, and said, "Surely these are not the signs of squalid misery and want." I called to mind my impressions of the world, my memories of life and society, and asked, "Can these be the sentiments of a miserable outcast?" Assuredly, my poor brain was sorely tried to reconcile these strong contradictions; nor do I yet understand how I obtained sufficient mastery over my emotions to present myself at the house of my entertainer.

"What name, sir?" said the obsequious servant, who, with noiseless footsteps, had preceded me to the drawing-room door.

"What name shall I announce, sir?" said he, a second time, as, overwhelmed with confusion, I still stood speechless before him. Till that very moment all thought on the subject had escaped me, and I utterly forgot that I was actually without a designation in the world. In all my shame and misery it had been a kind of consolation to me that the name of my father had never been degraded, and that whatever might have been my portion of worldly hardship, the once-honoured appellation

had not shared in it. To assume it at this instant was too perilous. Another day, one short night, would again reduce me to the same ignominious station; and I should have thus, by a momentary rashness, compromised the greatest secret of my heart. A third time did he ask the same question; and as I stood uncertain and overwhelmed, a quiet foot was heard ascending the stairs; a handsome, bright-looking man came forward; the door was flung open at his approach; and the servant called out, "Mr. Sheridan." I followed quickly, and the door closed behind us. Hastily passing from Sheridan, O'Kelly came forward to me, and shook me cordially by the hand. Thanking me politely for my punctuality, he welcomed me with all the semblance of old friendship.

"Colonel Conway and Payne you are already acquainted with," said he, "but your long absence from England excuses you for not knowing my other friends. This is Mr. Sheridan"—we bowed—"Mr. Malcomb, Captain Seymour, Sir George Begley," and so on, with two or three more. He made a rapid tour of the party, holding me by the arm as he went, till he approached a chair where a young and very handsome man sat, laughing immoderately at some story another at his side was whispering to him.

"What the devil am I to call you?" said O'Kelly, to me, in my ear. "Tell me quickly."

Before I could stammer out my own sense of confusion, the person seated in the arm-chair, called out,—

"By Jove! O'Kelly must hear that. Tell him, Wyndham," But as suddenly stopping he said, "A friend of yours, O'Kelly?"

"Yes, your royal highness; a very old and valued friend, whom I have not seen since our school days. He has been vagabondising over the whole earth, fighting side by side with I know not how many of your royal highness's enemies; and having made his fortune, has come back to lose it here amongst us, as the only suitable reparation in his power for all his past misconduct."

"With such excellent intentions he could not have fallen into better hands than yours, O'Kelly," said the Prince, laughing; "and I wish all the fellows we have been subsidising these ten years no worse than to be your antagonists at picquet." Then addressing me, he said, "An Irishman, I presume?"

"Yes, your royal highness," said I, bowing deeply.

"He started as an O something, or Mac somebody," said O'Kelly, interrupting; "but having been Don'd in Spain,

'Strissemood' in Italy, and almost guillotined in France for calling himself Monsieur, he has come back to us without any designation that he dares to call his own."

"That is exactly what happened to a very well-known character in the reign of Charles I.," said Conway, "who called himself by the title of his last conquest in the fair sex, saying, — 'when I take a reputation I accept all the reproach of the name.'"

"There was another authority," said Sheridan—"a fellow who called himself the King of the Beggars, who styled himself each day after the man who gave him most; and died inheriting the name of Bamfield Moore Carew."

"Carew will do admirably for my friend here, then," said O'Kelly, "and we'll call him so henceforth."

It may be imagined with what a strange rush of emotion I accepted this designation, and laughingly joined in the caprice of the hour. I saw enough to convince me that all around received O'Kelly's story as a mere piece of jest, and that none had any suspicion of my real condition save himself and his two friends. This conviction served to set me much at my ease, and I went down to dinner with far less of constraint than might have been supposed for one in my situation.

I will not disguise the fact, that I thought for the first half-hour that every eye was on me; that whatever I did or said was the subject of general remark, and that my manner as I ate, and my tone as I spoke, were all watched and scrutinized. Gradually, however, I grew to perceive that I attracted no more notice than others about me, and that, to all purposes, I was admitted to a perfect equality with the rest.

Conversation ranged freely over a wide field. Politics of every state of Europe — the leading public characters and statesmen, their opinions and habits; the modes of life abroad, literature, and the drama, were all discussed, if not always with great knowledge, still with the ready smartness of practised talkers. Anecdotes and incidents of various kinds were narrated—quips and sharp replies abounded, and amidst much cleverness and agreeability, a truly good-humoured, convivial spirit leavened the whole mass, and made up a most pleasant party.

So interested had I become in the conversation about me, that I did not perceive how, by degrees, I had been drawn on to talk on a variety of subjects, which travel had made me familiar with, and to speak of persons of mark and station whom I had met and known. Still less did I remark that I

was submitted to a species of examination as to my veracity, and that I was asked for dates, and times, and place, in a manner that might have startled one more susceptible. Warmed with what I may dare to call my success, and heated with wine, I grew bolder; I stigmatized as gross ignorance and folly the policy of the English Government in maintaining a war for what no success could ever bring back again—the prestige of loyalty, and the respect once tendered to nobility.

I know not into what excesses my enthusiasm may have carried me. Enough when I say that I encountered the most brilliant talkers without fear, and entered the list with all that the day possessed of conversational power without any sense of faint-heartedness. On such questions as the military system of France, the division of parties in that country, the probable issue to which the struggle pointed, I was, indeed, better informed than my neighbours; but when they came to discuss the financial condition of the French, and what it had been in the late reigns, I at once recalled all my conversations with Law, with every detail of whose system I was perfectly familiar.

Of the anecdotes of that time—a most amusing illustration of society as it then existed—I remembered many; and I had the good fortune to see that the Prince listened with evident pleasure to my recitals; and, at last, it was in the very transport of success I found myself ascending the stairs to the drawing-room, while O'Kelly whispered in my ear,—

“Splendidly done, by Jove! The Prince is going to invite you to Carlton House.”

After coffee was served, the party sat down to play, of various kinds—dice, cards, and backgammon. At the Prince's whist table there was a vacant place, and I was invited to take it. I had twenty guineas in gold in my pocket. They were my all in the world; but had they been as many millions, I would not have scrupled to risk them at such a moment. There was a strange, almost insane spirit, that seemed to whisper to me that nothing could be too bold to adventure—no flight too high—no contrast with my real condition too striking to attempt! They who have braved danger and death to ascend some great glacier, the whole object, the one triumphant moment on which they behold the blaze of sunrise, may form some conception of the maddening ecstasy of my sensations.

“Do you play at whist? If so, come and join us,” said the Prince.

"Take my purse," whispered O'Kelly, endeavouring to slip it into my hand as he spoke.

I accepted the invitation; and, without taking any notice of O'Kelly's offer, took my place at the table.

"We play low stakes—too low, perhaps, for you," said his royal highness. "Mere guinea points; but there's Canthorpe, and Sedley, and two or three more, will indulge you in any wager you fancy."

"Fifty on the rubber, if you like, sir," said Colonel Canthorpe, a tall, soldier-like man, who stood with his back to the fire.

"If my friend O'Kelly will be my banker for to-night, I shall take your offer."

Without the slightest hesitation O'Kelly replied, "To be sure, my boy!"—and the game began.

My mastery at the game was soon apparent; and the Prince complimented me by saying,—

"I wish we could discover in what you are deficient; for up to this we have certainly not hit upon it."

It needed not all this flattery to make me feel almost mad with excitement. I remember little of that scene; but still there is one trait of it fast graven on my memory, to hold its place there for ever. It was this, that while I betted largely, and lost freely considerable sums, O'Kelly, who had become the security for my debts, never winced for a moment, nor showed the slightest mark of discomfiture or uneasiness. My demand, in the first instance, was suggested by the not over-generous motive of making him pay the penalty he had incurred by having invited me. He has called me his friend before the world, thought I, and if he means this for a cruel jest, it shall at least cost him dearly. In a sort of savage ferocity, I fed myself with thinking of the tortures with which I should afflict him, in return for all the agony and suffering I had myself gone through. He also shall know what it is to act a lie, said I to myself; and with this hateful resolve I sat down to play. His ready acceptance of my proposition, his gentleman-like ease and calm, his actual indifference as I lost, and lost heavily, soon staggered all my reasonings, and routed all my theory. And when, at last, the Prince, complimenting me on my skill, deplored the ill-luck that more than balanced it, O'Kelly said, gaily,—

"Depend on't, you'll have better fortune after supper. Come and have a glass of champagne."

I was now impatient until we were again at the card table.

All my former intentions were reversed, and I would have given my right hand to have been able to repay my debt to him ere I said "Good night." Perhaps he read what was passing within me; I almost suspect that he construed aright the restless anxiety that now beset me; for he whispered, as we went back to the drawing-room,—

"You are evidently out of luck. Wait for your revenge on another evening."

"Now or never," said I. And so was it in reality. I had secretly determined within myself to try and win back O'Kelly's losses, and if I failed, at once to stand forward and declare myself in my real character. No false shame, no real dread of the ignominy to which I should expose myself should prevent me; and with an oath to my own heart I ratified this compact.

Again we took our places; the stakes were now doubled; and all the excitement of mind was added to the gambler's infatuation. Colonel Canthorpe, who had been for some minutes occupied with his note-book, at last tore out the leaf he had been writing on, and handed it to me, saying,—

"Is that correct?"

The figures were six hundred and fifty—the amount of my loss.

I simply nodded an assent, and said,—

"We go on, I suppose?"

"We'll double, if you prefer it," said he.

"What says my banker?" said I.

"He says, 'Credit unlimited,'" cried O'Kelly, gaily.

"Egad, I wish mine would say as much," said the Prince, laughing, as he cut the cards for me to deal.

Although I had drank freely, and talked excitingly, my head became suddenly calm and collected, just as if some great emergency had sufficed to dispel all illusions, and enabled my faculties to assume their full exercise. Of O'Kelly I saw nothing more; he was occupied in an adjoining room; and even this element of anxiety was spared me.

I will not ask my reader to follow me through the vicissitudes of play, nor expect from him any share of interest in a passion which of all others is the most bereft of good, and allied with the very lowest of all motives, and the meanest of all ambitions. Enough that I tell the result. After a long course of defeats and disasters, I rose, not only clear of all my debts, but a winner of two hundred pounds.

The Prince heartily congratulated me on my good fortune,

saying that none could better deserve it. He complimented me much on my play, but still more on my admirable temper as a loser, a quality which, he added, he never could lay claim to.

"I'm a bad beaten man, but you are the very reverse," said he. "Dine with me on Saturday, and I hope to see how you'll comport yourself as a winner."

I had but time to bow my humble acknowledgment of this gracious speech, when O'Kelly came up, saying,—

"So, Canthorpe tells me you beat him after all; but I always knew how it would end—play must and will tell in the long run."

"Non numen habes si sit Prudentia—eh, O'Kelly?" said Conway.

"Prudentia means the ace of trumps, then," said Sheridan.

"Where shall I send you my debt?" said Canthorpe to me, in a whisper. "What's your club?"

"He's only just arrived in town," interrupted O'Kelly, "but I intend to put him up for Brooke's on Wednesday, and will ask you to second him. You're on the committee, I think?"

"Yes; and I'll do it with great pleasure," said Canthorpe.

"I'll settle your score for you," said O'Kelly to Canthorpe; and now, with much handshaking and cordiality, the party broke up.

"Don't go for a moment," said O'Kelly to me, as he passed to accompany the Prince downstairs. I sat down before the fire in the now deserted room, and burying my head between my hands, I endeavoured to bring my thoughts to something like order and discipline. It was to no use; the whirlwind of emotions I had endured still raged within me, and I could not satisfy myself which of all my characters was the real one. Was I the outcast, destitute and miserable?—or was I the friend of the high-born, and the associate of a Prince? Where was this to end?—should I awake to misery on the morrow, or was madness itself to be the issue to this strange dream? Heaven forgive me, if I almost wished it might be so; and if, in my abject terror, I would have chosen the half-unconscious existence of insanity to the sense of shame and self-upbraiding my future seemed to menace.

While I sat thus O'Kelly entered, and, having locked the door after him, took his place beside me. I was not aware of his presence till he said,—

"Well, Jack, I intended to mystify others, but, by Jove! it has ended in mystifying myself! Who the devil are you? What are you?"

"If I don't mistake me, you are the man to answer that question yourself. You presented me not alone to your friends, but to your Prince; and it is but fair to infer that you knew what you were about."

He stared at me steadily without speaking. I saw the state of confusion and embarrassment from which he suffered, and I actually revelled in the difficulty in which I had placed him. I perceived all the advantage of my position, and resolved to profit by it.

"One thing is quite evident," said I, calmly and collectedly, like a man who weighed all his words, and spoke with deep deliberation—"one thing is quite evident, you could scarcely have presumed to take such a liberty with your Prince, as to present to him, and place at the same table with him, a man whom you picked up from the streets—one whose very station marked him for an outcast—whose exterior showed his destitution. This, I conclude, you could not have dared to do; and yet it is in the direct conviction that such was my position yesterday, I sit here now, trying to reconcile such inconsistency, and asking myself which of us two is in the wrong."

"My good friend," said O'Kelly, with a deliberation fully the equal of my own, and in a way that, I must confess, somewhat abashed me—"my good friend, do not embarrass yourself by any anxieties for me. I am quite able and ready to account for my actions to any who deem themselves eligible to question them."

"From which number," said I, interrupting, "you would, of course, infer that I am to be excluded?"

"By no means," said he, "if you can satisfy me to the contrary. I shall hold myself as responsible to you as to any one of those gentlemen who have just left us, if you will merely show me sufficient cause."

"As how, for instance?" asked I.

"Simply by declaring yourself the rightful possessor of a station and rank in life for which your habits and manners plainly show you to be fitted. Let me be convinced that you have not derogated from this by any act unworthy of a man of honour——"

"Stop, sir," said I. "By what right do you dare to put me on my trial? Of your own free will you presumed to ask for my companionship. You extended to me an equality, which, if not sincere, was an insult."

"Egad! if you be really a gentleman, your reasons are all good ones," said O'Kelly. "I own, too, frankly, I intended my

freak as the subject of a wager. If I be caught in my own toils, I must only pay the penalty."

"And give me satisfaction?"

"That is what I mean," replied he, bowing.

"Then you have done it already," said I, rising. "I ask for no more than the frank and manly readiness with which you acknowledge that poverty is no disqualification to the assertion of an honourable pride, and that the feeling of a gentleman may still throb in the heart of a ragged man."

"You are surely not going to leave me this way," said he, catching my hand in both his own. "You'll tell me who you are—you'll let me know at least something of you."

"Not now, at all events," said I. "I'm not in a mood to encounter more at present. Good night. Before I leave you, however, I owe it, as some return for your hospitality, to say that I shall not hazard your credit with your Prince—I do not mean to accept his invitation. You must find the fitting apology, for I shall leave England to-morrow, in all likelihood for years—at all events, for a period long enough to make this incident forgotten. Good-bye."

"By Jove! I'll never forgive myself, if we part in this fashion," said O'Kelly. "Do—as a proof of some regard, or at least, of some consideration for me—do tell me your real name."

"Carew," said I, calmly.

"No, no; that was but a jest. I ask in all earnestness and sincerity; tell me your name."

"Jasper Carew," said I, again; and, before he could collect himself to reply, I had reached the door; and, with a last "Good-night," I passed out, and left him.

I could not bring myself to return to my miserable lodging again. I felt as if a new phase of life had opened on me, and that it would be an act of meanness to revert to the scenes of my former obscurity. I entered a hotel, and ordered a room. My appearance and dress at once exacted every respect and attention. A handsome chamber was immediately prepared for me; and, just as day was breaking, I fell off into a deep sleep, which lasted till late in the afternoon.



CHAPTER XL.

AT SEA.

I CANNOT attempt to describe my feelings on awaking, nor the lamentable failure of all my efforts at recalling the events of the night before. That many real occurrences seemed to me the mere effects of wine and a heated imagination, and that some of the very wildest freaks of my fancy were assumed by me as facts, I can now readily believe. In truth, my head was in a state of the wildest credulity and the very narrowest distrust, and my only astonishment now is, how I resisted impulses plainly suggested by coming insanity.

At one time I thought of calling O'Kelly out; then my indignation was directed against some other of the company, for either a real or a fancied grievance. Perhaps they had all been in the league against me, and that I had been invited merely to make a sport of my absurd pretensions, and to afford laughter by my vanity. Then it occurred to me that it was the Prince himself who was insulted by my companionship, and that they who had dared to make me the means of such an outrage should be held accountable.

Lastly came the thought, is the whole a dream? Have I been drugged to play some absurd and ridiculous part, and shall I be exposed to ridicule when I appear abroad again? This impression was strengthened by the appearance of my dress, so unlike anything I had ever worn before. Of the incidents of the card table I could remember next to nothing. A few trivial facts of the game—an accidental event in the play itself, remained in my memory, but that was all. I fancied I had been a heavy loser; but how, when, or to whom, I knew not. I opened my pocket-book, and found four notes for fifty pounds each, but how they came there I could not conceive! And yet, said I, all this took place yesterday! and what was I before that?—where did I live, and with whom associate? My head began to turn—the strangest thoughts chased each other through my brain. Incidents of the street, collisions and accidents of all kinds, were mingled with events of the previous evening: want and squalor stood side by side with splendour, and the

bland accents of royalty blended themselves with the brutal exclamations of my former fellows. Then there flashed across me the thought, that the drama in which I had been made to perform was not yet played out. They mean me to figure further on the boards, said I to myself; the money has been supplied to me to tempt me into extravagance, which shall make me even more ridiculous still. My every action watched, my words listened to, my gestures noted down, I am to be the butt of their sarcastic pleasure, and all my pretensions to the habits, the feelings, and the manners of a gentleman, be held up as a subject for mockery and derision.

I half dreaded to ring the bell and summon the waiter, lest I should be exposing myself to a spy on my actions. When I approached the window to look out, I fancied that every accidental glance of a passer-by was the prying gaze of insolent curiosity. It was in a state of fever that I dressed myself, and even then my costume of full dinner dress made me feel ashamed to venture abroad. At last I took courage to order breakfast. The respectful demeanour of the waiter gave me further confidence, and I ventured to ask him a few questions on passing events. I learned that the hotel was one usually frequented by foreigners, for whose accommodation two or three Continental newspapers were taken. At my request he fetched me one of these—*La Gazette de Paris*; and with this for my companion, I sat myself down at my fire, resolved to remain a close prisoner for at least a day or two.

Towards evening I sent for a tailor, and ordered two suits of clothes, with linen, and, in fact, all that I stood in need of; and when night set in, I issued forth to make several small purchases of articles I wanted. It was late when I entered the hotel, and not having eaten any dinner, I felt hungry. The waiter showed me into the coffee-room, which was arrayed in foreign fashion, and where they supped *à la carte*.

The general appearance of the company at once proclaimed their origin; and a less practised eye than mine even might have seen that they were all natives of some continental country. They talked loudly, and gesticulated wildly, careless to all seeming of being overheard by strangers, and little regarding in whose presence they might be standing. Their bearing was, in fact, such as speedily set me at ease amongst them, and made me feel myself unnoticed and unremarked.

Seated at a small table by myself, I ordered my supper, and half carelessly watched the others while it was being prepared. Whatever they might have been by birth or station, they

seemed now all in the very narrowest circumstances. Threadbare coats and broken boots, worn hats and gloveless hands, bespoke their condition; nor could all the swagger of manner, or pretentious display of a ribbon or a cross, cover over the evidences of real poverty that oppressed them.

Had I noticed these signs earlier, I should certainly have restricted myself to a meal more befitting the place and its occupants. The humble suppers I saw around me of bread and cheese now shocked me, at what might well appear display on my part; and had there been time to correct my error, I should gladly have done so. It was, however, too late. Already had the landlord carried in a silver tureen of soup, and set it before me; and the tall neck of a champagne bottle rose amidst the mimic icebergs at my side.

The others took no pains to hide their astonishment at all this; they stood in knots and groups about, with eyes directed full upon me, and as evidently made me the subject of their remarks. I could perceive that the landlord was far from being at his ease, and that all his endeavours were employed either to conceal from me these demonstrations, or to give them some harmless interpretation.

"You have travelled, sir, and know well what foreigners are," said he, in a whisper; "and although all these are gentlemen by birth, from one misfortune or other they are a bit down in the world now, and they look with jealousy at any one better off than themselves."

"Foreigners are usually better bred than to exhibit such feelings," said I.

"Nor would they, perhaps, sir, if at home and in prosperity; but so many are ruined now by wars and revolutions—so many banished and exiled—that one ought to make large allowances for their tempers. That old man yonder, for instance, was a Duke, somewhere in Brittany; and the thin, tall one, that is gesticulating with his stick, served as colonel in the bodyguard of the King of France. And there, next the fire—you see he has taken off a kind of smock frock and is drying it at the blaze—that is a Pomeranian Count, who owned a principality once, they tell me."

"He looks very poor now; what means of support has he?"

"None, I believe, sir; he was bred to nothing, and can neither teach drawing, nor music, nor the sword exercise, like Frenchmen or Italians: and the consequence is, that he actually—you'll not believe it, but it is true, notwithstanding—he actually sweeps a crossing at Cheapside for his living."

I started as he said this as if I had been stung by a reptile. For a moment I was convinced that the speech was a designed insult. I thought that the very expression of his eyes as he turned them on me was malignant. It was all I could do not to resent the insolence; but I restrained myself and was silent.

"Heaven knows," continued he, "if he have eaten once to-day."

"Do you think," said I, "it would be possible to induce him to join me at supper—I mean, could it be managed without offence?"

"Egad, I should say so, sir, and easily enough, too. These poor fellows have gone through too much to carry any excess of pride about with them."

"Would you undertake the office, then?" asked I.

"With pleasure, sir;" and, as he spoke, he crossed the room, and standing over the old man's chair, whispered in his ear. I soon perceived, by the manner of each, that the negotiation was not as simple as he had fancied it. Remark, reply, and rejoinder seemed to follow each other quickly; and I could almost detect something like an insolent rejection of the landlord's suit in the old man's manner. Indeed I had not long to remain in doubt on the subject; for rising from his seat, the Count addressed some hurried words to those about him, to which they replied by expressions of anger and astonishment. In vain the landlord interposed, and tried to calm down their impatience; they grew more and more excited, and I could detect expressions of insulting meaning through what they uttered.

"What is the matter?" asked I of the landlord; but, ere he could reply, a tall, dark man, with the marked physiognomy of a Pole, came up to me and said,—

"The Graf von Bildstein has received a grave provocation at your hands; are you prepared to justify it?"

"I must first of all learn how I may have offended him," said I, calmly.

"We all of us heard it," said he impatiently; "you insulted every man in this room through him. Either, then, you leave it at once (and he pointed insolently to the door), or you give him satisfaction."

The only reply I made to this speech was a haughty laugh, as I filled my glass with champagne. I had but done so, when, with a blow of his cane, he swept my bottle and the glasses from the table; and then, stepping back, and drawing a sword from the stick, threw himself into an attitude of defence. I

drew my sword, and rushed in on him. Either that he was not a skilful fencer, or unprepared for the suddenness of my attack, he defended himself badly ; his guards were all wide, and his eyes unsteady. I felt my advantage in a moment, and after a couple of passes, ran my point through his side, just close to the ribs. A loud cry from the bystanders, as the blood gushed forth, now stopped the encounter, and they speedily dashed forward to catch him, as he reeled and fell.

"Away with you, for Heaven's sake, or you are a murdered man," cried the landlord to me, while he pushed me violently from the room, and out into the street, barring and bolting the door within, at the same instant. The terrible clamour inside, and the efforts to force a passage, now warned me of my danger, and I fled at the very top of my speed, not knowing nor caring whither. I had gone considerably above a mile ere I ventured to halt and draw breath. I was in a part of the city with narrow streets and tall warehouses, dark, gloomy, and solitary ; a small, mean-looking alley led me down to the river's side, from which I could perceive the Tower quite close, and a crowd of shipping in the stream. A small schooner, with a foresail alone set, was just getting under way, and as she slowly moved along, boats came and went from the shore to her.

"Want to go aboard, sir?" asked a waterman, who observed me, as I stood watching the movement of the craft. I nodded, and the next moment we were alongside. I asked for the skipper, and heard that he was to join us at Gravesend. The mate politely said I might go below, and accepting the permission, I descended to the cabin, and lay down on a bench. A boy was cleaning plates and glasses in a little nook at one side, and from him I learned that the schooner was the *Martha*, of Hull, bound for Cherbourg—her captain was her owner, and usually traded between the English coast and the Channel Islands. At all events, thought I, I am safe out of England ; and with that reflection I turned on my side, and went off to sleep.

Just as day broke the skipper came on board, and I could perceive by the gushing noise beside my ear, that we were going fast through the water. The craft lay over too, and seemed as if under a press of canvas. It was not for full an hour afterwards that the skipper descended to the cabin, and shaking me roughly by the shoulder, asked how I came there.

I had gone asleep concocting a story to account for my presence ; and so I told him in a few words, that I had just been engaged in a duel, wherein I had wounded my antagonist ;

that as the event had occurred suddenly, I had no time for any preparation, but just threw myself on board the first craft about to sail, ready and willing to pay liberally for the succour it afforded me.

Either he disbelieved my narrative, or fancied that it might involve himself in some trouble, for he doggedly said I had no right to come a-board of her without his leave, and that he should certainly put in at Ramsgate, and hand me over to the authorities.

"Be it so," said I, with an affected indifference. "The greater fool you, not to earn fifty guineas for a kind office, than go out of your way to do a churlish one."

He left me at this to go up on deck, and came down again about half an hour later. I heard enough to convince me that the wind was freshening, and that a heavy sea, too, was getting up, so that in all likelihood he would hesitate ere he'd try to put in at Ramsgate. He did not speak to me this time, but sat with folded arms watching me, as I lay pretending to be asleep. At length he said,—

"I say, friend, you've got no passport, I suppose? How do you mean to land in France? or, if there, how do you propose to travel?"

"These are matters I don't mean to trouble you about, Captain," said I haughtily; and though I said the words boldly enough, it was exactly the very puzzle that was then working in my brain.

"Ay, sir; but they are exactly matters that concern me; for you are not on the schooner's manifest—you are not one of her crew—and I don't mean to get into trouble on your behalf."

"Put me ashore at night, or leave me to reach it in any way," said I, half angrily, for I was well nigh out of patience at these everlasting difficulties.

He made no reply to this speech, but starting suddenly up, like a man who had hastily made up his mind on some particular course, he went up on deck. I overheard orders given, and immediately after a stir and bustle among the sailors, and in my anxiety at once connected myself with these movements. What project had they regarding me?—in what way did they mean to treat me? were the questions that rose to my mind. The heavy working of the craft showed me that her course had been altered, and I began to dread lest we should be turning again towards England.

From these thoughts my mind wandered back and back, reviewing the chief events of my life, and wondering whether I

were ever destined to reach one spot that I could rest in, and where my weary spirit might find peace. To be the sport of Fortune in her most wilful of moods seemed, indeed, my lot; and to go on through life unattached to my fellows, appeared my fate. I remember once to have read in some French author that the attachment we feel to home, the sacred names of son and brother, are not more than the instincts of habit; that natural affection, as it is called, has no real existence; and that it is the mere force of repetition that forms the tie by which we love those whom we call father or mother. It is a cold and a cheerless theory, and yet now it struck me with a certain melancholy satisfaction to think that, save in the name of parentage, I was not worse off than others.

The hours glided on unnoticed, as I lay thus dreaming, and night at last fell, dark and starless. I had almost attained to a kind of careless indifference as to my future, when the mate, coming up to me, said,—

“Wake up, master; we’re going to put you ashore here.”

I made no answer—half in recklessness, half in pride, I was silent.

“You’d better throw my boat-cloak over you. It’s blowing fresh, and a heavy sea running,” said he, in a kindly voice.

“Thanks,” said I, declining; “but I’m little used to care for my comforts. Can I see the skipper?”

“He told me that he preferred not to see you,” said the mate, hesitatingly, “and bade me arrange for putting you ashore myself.”

“It is a question of money—not of politeness—with me,” said I, producing my purse. “Tell me what I owe him?”

“Not a farthing, sir. He’d not touch a piece of money that belonged to you. He only wants you to go your way, and part company with him.”

“Why—what does he take me for? What means this dread of me?”

The man looked confusedly up and down, to either hand, and was silent. At last he said,—

“Come; all this is lost time. We’re close in now. Are you ready, sir?”

“Quite ready,” said I, rising and following him.

The boat’s crew was already mustered, and springing into the boat, she was lowered at once; and before I well knew of it, we were plunging through a heavy sea, by the force of four strong oars.

Through the darkness and the showering spray we went—now rising on the crest of some swelling wave—now diving down between the foaming cataracts. I never asked whither we were bound. I scarcely wished for land. There was something so exciting in the sense of peril about, that I only desired it might continue. Such a relief is physical danger to the slow and cankering disease of a despairing heart!



CHAPTER XLI.

L Y S.

A LONG, low line of coast loomed through the darkness, and towards this we now rowed through a heavy, breaking surf. More than once did they lie on their oars to consult as to the best landing-place, and again resume their labour as before. At last, seeing that neither creek nor inlet presented itself they made straight for the shore, and when within about thirty paces of the strand, they dropped anchor and suffered the boat to drift into shallow water.

"There now, master," said the steersman to me, "you'll have to wet your feet, for we can't venture further in. Jump over, and you'll soon touch land again."

I obeyed without a word, and ere I reached the shore the boat was already on her way back to the schooner. As I stood gazing on the dark expanse of sea before me, and then turned to the gloomy outline of the land, I felt a sense of desolation no words can render. I had not the very vaguest notion where I was. So far as I could see, there were no traces of habitation near; and as I wandered inland, the same unbroken succession of sand hummocks surrounded me. How strange is it that in this old Europe of ours, so time-worn by civilisation, so crossed and recrossed by man's labours, how many spots there are which, in this wild solitude, might well be supposed to form parts of Africa or distant America! The day broke to find me still wandering along these dreary sand-hills, but to my

great delight two church towers, about a league off, showed me that a village was near; and thither I now proceeded to bend my steps.

After walking about a mile I reached a high road, which evidently led to the village: and now it became necessary to bethink me what account I should give of myself, and how explain my appearance when questioned, as I inevitably should be, by the authorities.

My drenched and shrunk-up clothes and my way-worn look might well have warranted the story of a shipwreck, and for some minutes I had almost resolved to give that version of my calamity; but I was so weary of the vicissitudes a false representation involved, so actually tired out by the labour of sustaining a part that was not my own, that I determined to take no heed of what was to follow, and leave myself to the chances of destiny, without a struggle against them.

Fortune, thought I, has never been over kind to me when I did my best to woo her; let me see if a little indifference on my part may not render her more graciously disposed. From some peasants on their way to market I learned that the village was called Lys, and was on the high road to Montrenil. At all events, then, I was in France, which was almost as much my country as England, and with even so much did I rally my spirits and encourage my hopes. The country-people, with their pack mules, stared at my strange appearance, and evidently wondered what manner of man I might be, for I still wore my full-dress suit; and my lace ruffles and sabot, however discoloured, showed undeniable signs of condition. Many however, saluted me respectfully, and touched their hats as to one of rank above their own, and not one displayed anything approaching levity or a jest at my singular exterior. It might possibly have been the secluded character of the spot itself, or that the recent peace with England had brought about the change; but whatever the cause, neither police nor gendarmerie questioned me as to my passport, and I strolled into the first café that presented itself, to take my breakfast, without hindrance or impediment.

While I enjoyed my meal, I amused myself with the newspapers, at that time filled with descriptions of festivities and court receptions, at which the English were the honoured guests. Instead of the accustomed allusions to insular eccentricity, awkwardness, and boorish unsociality, there were nothing but praises of English frankness and cordial simplicity. I saw that the Government, for doubtless good reasons of its own,

had given the initiative to this new estimation of my countrymen; and resolved, if possible, to reap the benefit of it, I repaired to the Mairie, and asked to see the "Maire." In a few words, I told him that I had laid a heavy wager to travel up to Paris, and back to England without a passport; that I had made this foolish bet at a dinner party, which I quitted to accomplish my undertaking. My intention had been to have landed at Havre; but, by ill luck, we were driven on shore to the north'ard, and narrowly escaped shipwreck; from which having saved myself, I reached Lys, destitute of everything, save a small sum of money I carried about me. I told this story with the air of one who really felt that any impediment to so harmless a project must be impossible, and with such success, that the Maire invited me into his drawing-room to repeat my tale to his family, as an excellent illustration of the length to which English eccentricity could go.

My manners, the facility with which I spoke French, my calm assurance of not requiring any other aid or assistance than the friendly offices of the authorities, so gained his favour, that he promised to think over the matter, and give me his opinion in the morning. I asked for no more. I was not impatient to get forward; and at that moment the little grass grown streets and alleys of Lys were as pleasing to me as the most fashionable thoroughfares of a great city.

He did not send for me, as he promised, on the following morning. A second day and a third passed over with the same results; and still I remained loitering about the village, and making acquaintance with every notable monument, from its quaint old church to the little obelisk in the market-place, commemorating the birthplace of its great citizen, the architect Mansard.

I had by this time formed two or three slight acquaintanceships with the townsfolk, who, although living on a high road much traversed by travellers, were a simple-minded and maritime set of people. The little routine of this quaint old spot also pleased me; and I persuaded myself that I should ask nothing better from fortune than to be able to pass my life and end my days in Lys. Vast numbers of English poured daily into France at this time; and it was one of my chief amusements to sit at the little café in front of the "poste," and watch them as they changed horses. I do not suppose that even yet our countrymen escape from what would appear to be the almost inevitable blunders of foreign travel; but at the time I speak of, these mistakes and misapprehensions were far greater.

The Continent and its languages were alike new to them. National peculiarities were all more marked, and John Bull himself less compliant and more exacting than he now is.

As the temper and tone of the day were, however, favourable to England, and as Englishmen were remarkable for the liberality of their payments for all services rendered them, the nation was popular, and whatever errors or awkwardness they committed were speedily forgotten or forgiven. I was seated, as was my custom, one morning, watching the tide of travellers that rolled by unceasingly, when a large travelling carriage, with eight horses and a mounted courier in front, drew up at the "poste." While the horses were being harnessed, two gentlemen descended, and crossing the "Place," entered the café. One was a large, full, and somewhat handsome man, with that florid look and air so characteristic of an English country squire; the other I had not time to remark ere he came up to me and said,—

"Happy to meet you again, Mr. Carew; I trust you don't forget me."

It was Colonel Canthorpe, whom I had met at O'Kelly's dinner-table.

"This chance meeting is a piece of good fortune," continued he, "since it enables me to pay a debt I owe you. On looking over my memorandum-book, I discovered I had lost three hundred, and not two, to you. Am I correct?"

I professed, with truth, that I had no recollection of the matter, nor had anything to guide me to its memory.

"I'm quite positive that I'm right, however," said he, "and you must allow me to acquit myself of the obligation. Who is your banker at Paris?"

I had to say that so many years had passed over since I was there, I really had not thought of selecting one.

"But you are going on thither?" asked he.

"Yes, in a day or two; that is, as soon as I have arranged a difficulty about my passport."

"If that's the only thing that detains you," said he, "pray accept of mine. In travelling with my friend, Mr. Fox, I need none."

I turned at the sound of the name, and at once recognized, by the resemblance to the prints, the bluff and manly features of the great leader of the Opposition.

"This is our famous whist-player, Fox, Mr. Carew," said Canthorpe, presenting me; and the other rose and received me

most courteously, adding some little compliments on my reputed skill at the game.

While we were yet talking, their breakfast made its appearance, and I was invited to partake of the meal, a politeness which I accepted of readily, while I congratulated myself by thinking that up to this time at least O'Kelly had not divulged the secret of my former station.

The conversation turned principally on France and its relations with England; and I was surprised to find the great parliamentary leader so little acquainted with either the character of the people or of those who ruled them. He seemed willing to accept all the present civil overtures as guarantees of lasting and cordial friendship, and to regard, as antiquated and unworthy prejudices, those expressions of distrust to which, in my more intimate knowledge of France, I occasionally gave utterance.

"Mr. Carew's whist experiences, I perceive," said he, "are not his guides in politics. He will not trust his partner."

"There is this difference," said I, "that in whist you sit opposite to your ally: in politics, as in war, your vis-à-vis is your enemy."

"For my part," said he, good-humouredly, "I think, having fought against each other—bravely fought, as France and England have—is one of the very best elements towards a lasting peace. Each must by this time have attained to a proper estimate of the other; and from that source alone a degree of respect springs up, fit to become the foundation of true friendship. Your theory excludes all notion of a rivalry, sir."

"Rivalry can exist only between small states or individuals. Great countries have great ambitions, and these are usually above mere rivalries."

I have quoted, word for word, the expressions he made use of, less for any importance of their own than for the sake of the man who spoke them. They were, as I afterwards came to know, specimens of that careless habit of talking in which he constantly indulged, and in which an indolent goodnature rather swayed him than the use of those fine faculties of judgment he so eminently possessed. My more intimate acquaintance with France and its language gave me certain advantages in our discussion, which he soon perceived, and he questioned me closely about the people and their natural tendencies.

Colonel Canthorpe came twice to announce that the horses were ready, and yet still Mr. Fox stood, inquiring eagerly into points of which he confessed himself quite uninformed.

"How glad I should be," said he, "to have an opportunity of continuing this conversation. Is there any chance of our meeting at Paris?"

I owned that the expression of his wish on the subject quite decided me to go there.

"On what day, then, may I expect you?—shall we say Saturday, and at dinner?"

"Most willingly," said I, "if I can accomplish it."

"As to the passport, nothing easier," said Canthorpe. "This is mine—it is perfectly regular—requires no *visé*; and once in Paris, my friend here will obtain one for you in your own name."

"Just so," said Fox, shaking my hand cordially; and repeating "Saturday—Quillac's Hotel," away he went, leaving me almost incredulous of all I had seen and been saying.



CHAPTER XLII.

THE COMING SHADOW.

I ARRIVED in Paris a few days after, and took up my abode at the Hotel Quillac, then one of the most splendid in the capital. Mr. Fox and Colonel Canthorpe received me most courteously, willingly accepting my guidance in their visits to the various objects of interest that this glorious city contains. Such a knowledge of the language as I possessed was a rarer gift at that time than it now is, when education and foreign travel are so widely enjoyed ; and I could plainly see that they regarded their chance acquaintanceship with me as quite a piece of good fortune. This did not, however, prevent their feeling—as I could perceive they felt—a most lively curiosity as to what might have been my former life, where it had been passed, and how. Too well bred to suffer this anxiety of theirs to appear, except by a mere accident, yet it was evident to me, by a hundred little circumstances, how it formed a constant subject of conversation between them.

I am far from implying that their intercourse with me was marked by anything like distrust or suspicion ; on the contrary, they talked freely in my presence on every subject ; and upon politics Mr. Fox especially spoke with a degree of openness that, had he been less distinguished, I should have presumed to call indiscreet. He made almost daily visits at the Tuileries, and never hesitated, on his return, to recount to us what had passed between the First Consul and himself.

The manly character of the English statesman contributed to give the interviews many very interesting traits, to which also his imperfect knowledge of French lent several amusing features. Were I not afraid of repeating well-known anecdotes, I should avail myself of this opportunity to recall some instances of these. At all events, I am happy to have the occasion of saying, that the veriest Tory that ever inveighed against France, never had a more thoroughly English heart and spirit than Charles Fox. I have seen it imputed to him, that in his partisanship he would willingly have accepted a dishonourable peace, and made common cause with the First Consul on any terms ; and I affirm

that I am in a position to refute this foul charge, and prove it a calumny.

Neither, as was asserted at the time, did the unquestionable fascination of Bonaparte's manner gain a complete ascendancy over the Englishman's less cultivated tact. It is true he came back—as who would not?—from these meetings, amazed at the extensive knowledge, the vast acquirements, and the profound sagacity of that great man; nor did he hesitate to own that even these were thrown into the shade by the charms of his manner, and the captivation of an address, which I believe at that period had reached its very point of perfection.

An attack of gout confined Mr. Fox for some time to his room, and thus interfered with the progress of an intimacy that might be fairly called friendship. Who can say now, how far the highest interests of mankind, the fortunes of the whole world, may not have been influenced by that casual indisposition! It is certain that Fox had already been able to disabuse Bonaparte's mind with regard to a variety of things, in which he judged erroneously. He had succeeded in setting him right on several points of our national spirit and the spirit of our constitution. He had even done much towards convincing him that England was not inspired with an insane hatred to France, and would willingly live at peace with her, only asking that a peace should have guarantees for its duration, and not be, as it but too often is, but the interval of preparation for war. I say then, again, what a change might there have been to the destinies of mankind, had this intercourse gone on uninterruptedly! How differently might Bonaparte have learned to regard and consider Englishmen, and what allowances might he not have come to make for peculiarities purely national!

How naturally might a great intelligence like his have seen, that the alliance of two such nations is the guarantee of civilization throughout the globe, and that all our smaller rivalries and national jealousies sink to insignificance when viewed in presence of the great perils to which disunion exposes us—perils that, at the hour in which I write these lines, are neither vague nor visionary, and against which an honest and cordial alliance can alone prevail. Let it be taken as the tremulous terror of an old man's mind if I add, that even banded together, and with all their energies to the task, they will not be more than enough for the work that is before them.

I have spoken of the friendly reception I met with from Mr. Fox. I dined constantly with him and Colonel Canthorpe alone,

and accompanied them frequently on their evening visits amongst their acquaintances. I joined in everything, even to the high play which they both were passionately devoted to, and lost and won without any decisive results. Meanwhile my resources ran lower and lower. The style of living I maintained was costly ; and at the end of some weeks I saw myself with barely sufficient to carry me through another fortnight. To this very hour I cannot explain to myself the calm indifference with which I contemplated my approaching and inevitable ruin. I really know nothing of the flatteries by which I may have beguiled my own heart, and am left to the conclusion, that the intoxicating pleasures of the time had rendered me insensible to every thought for the future. I went further too than might be supposed possible. I accepted invitations to shoot in Scotland, and pass my Christmas at Canthorpe's seat in Cumberland, promising everything with the ease of one free to dispose of himself as he fancied.

Meanwhile time went on. I had asked Mr. Fox and Canthorpe to dine with me at the *Fleur-de-Pois*, outside the barrier. It was a celebrated restaurant of those times, as distinguished for the excellence of its wine as the perfection of its cookery. I had often given myself the airs of connoisseurship in these matters, and I was resolved that my entertainment should not disparage my taste.

More than one morning had I passed in council over the bill of fare, discussing the order of the courses, canvassing the appropriate sauces, and tasting the various wines. It was to be a *Diner à soixante francs par tête*—the reader may imagine the rest. I knew that my friends were unacquainted with the repute this house enjoyed, and I congratulated myself in fancying the surprise they would feel at the unexpected perfection of every arrangement within doors. I went down early on the morning of the eventful day to see that everything was in readiness. All was perfect ; the table was decorated with the choicest flowers, amidst which an ornamental desert lay scattered as it were. The temperature of the room, the lighting—all were cared for ; and I returned to Paris fully satisfied that nothing had been omitted or forgotten. Instead, however, of repairing to my hotel, I went to a small restaurant near the Luxembourg to breakfast, and lounged afterwards at the gardens there, intending to keep myself "up" for the evening, and not dissipate any of those conversational resources I wished to hoard for the hours of conviviality. The reader may well smile at the inconsistency of the man who could so collectedly

devise a few hours of pleasure, and yet face the whole future without a moment's thought or deliberation! Towards five o'clock I sauntered slowly back to the hotel.

"A note for you, sir," said the porter, presenting me with a letter as I entered. "The gentleman said it was to be given to you the moment you came in."

I took it with a strange, half-sickening sense of coming evil, I broke the seal, and read:—

"Crillan, Three o'clock.

"DEAR C.,—We are off for England at a moment's warning, and have only time to counsel you to the same. There is some mischief brewing, and the d——d Tories are likely to involve us in another war. Keep this to yourself. Get your passport ready, and let us soon see you across the water. With many regrets from F. and myself at the loss of your good dinner to-day, believe me yours truly,

"GEORGE CANTHORPE."

The whole fabric in which I had been living for weeks past fell at once to the ground—all the illusions of my daily existence were suddenly swept away, and there I stood in presence of my own heart—a poor bankrupt pretender, without one to know or acknowledge him.

I hastened to my room, and sat down, for some minutes actually overwhelmed by the chaotic flood of thought that now poured through my brain. Very little calm consideration would have shown me that my real condition in life had undergone no change. That I stood precisely as I had done the day before—a ruined, houseless adventurer! With a little reflection, too, it is not impossible I might have congratulated myself that my separation had not been brought about by any disgraceful discovery of my actual rank in life, and that I had escaped the humiliation of an exposure. These thoughts came later; for the moment all was sadness and gloomy depression.

The waiter entered to say, that the carriage Monsieur had ordered was at the door, and it took me some minutes to recall my mind to the fact, and to remember that I had ordered a carriage to convey us to the restaurant. "Be it so," said I to myself, "let us play out the comedy;" and with this resolve I proceeded to dress myself for dinner with all the elegance I could bestow on my toilet.

Had I been about to dine at court, I could not have been more particular. My sabot and ruffles were of the finest

‘Valenciennes;’ my vest was white satin, richly embroidered with gold; and the hilt of my sword glittered with marquetise and turquoise. I took a look at myself in the glass, and almost started back as I saw the contrast between this finery of my apparel and the haggard expression of my features; for though my cheek was flushed and my eyes sparkled, my mouth was drawn down, and my thin parched lips denoted fever. There was that in my looks that actually scared myself.

“To the Fleur-de-Pois,” said I, throwing myself back in the carriage; and away we drove along the crowded Boulevard, many an eye turned on the foppish figure that lounged so elegantly in his carriage, never suspecting the while what the tone of his thoughts at that moment were, and that he was gravely canvassing within himself the strange stories that would circulate on the morrow, should his body be taken up in the “Filets de St. Cloud.” True was it, the dark and muddy Seine, the cold, fast-flowing river, was never out of my thoughts. It swept, torrent-like, through all my reasoning, and the surging water seemed to rise and swell around me. At that moment short fitful thoughts of the long past shot through my mind; and my mother, and Raper, and Margot, too, came and went before me. Where were all the teachings of my infancy now—where the holy aspirations of my early boyhood?—where the simple tastes and lowly desires, the home affections and blest humility I once loved to dream over?—where that calm existence, so bounded by easy ambitions?—and where, above all, that honesty of life that spurned every thought of deception? “A meet ending for such a career,” said I, bitterly, as I gazed down on the river along whose bank we were driving. “Ay,” thought I, as we passed along, “there is not one so miserable nor so poor with whom I would not change places, only that this mockery should cease, and that I should be something to my own heart besides a cheat.”

The day suddenly grew overcast, the clouds massed themselves heavily together, and the rain began to descend in torrents. When we reached the restaurant the storm had become a hurricane, and all who had been preparing to dine through the arbours of the garden were quickly driven to seek shelter within doors. As I descended from the carriage, all was tumult and confusion; for although every available spot had been given up to the guests, yet from their numbers they were crowded together most uncomfortably, and loud and angry complaints and remonstrances were heard on all sides. In vain the waiters heard patiently or answered courteously the various

discontents of those who appealed to their rank and station as claims for special consideration. Distinguished generals, ministers, great leaders of fashion, were all condemned to the same indiscriminate fortune of humbler natures.

From where I sat in the little *salon* reserved for myself, I could overhear these complaints and remonstrances, and it was in a kind of savage irony with Fortune, that I bethought me of my sumptuous lot in comparison with the discomforts of those around me. Twice or thrice was my door flung open by persons in search of an apartment, and in this confusion and shame I revelled as in a momentary triumph. At length, in an interval of comparative quiet, I thought I heard voices whispering outside my door. I listened, and could distinguish that they were female accents, and discussing, as it seemed, some project on which they were not agreed. One appeared to insist as eagerly as the other was bent upon opposing; and the words, "Mais oui," "Mais non," followed in quick succession. I know not how it was, but I conceived a most intense curiosity to learn the subject of the discussion. I felt as if I must have some share or concern in the matter, and eagerly bent my ear to hear further. Nor was I wrong. The question argued was, whether or not the two ladies should appeal to the gallantry of the occupant of the room to afford them shelter, till such time as their carriage might arrive to fetch them for Paris. She who spoke with more authority was in favour of the appeal, while the younger voice expressed dissent to it.

Being in a measure a party to the cause, I resolved to lend what influence I might possess towards the decision; and so, flinging wide the door, I saluted the strangers courteously, and informing them that I had accidentally overheard their discussion, begged they would permit me to decide it, by placing my apartment at their disposal at once. The elder of the two immediately addressed me in a tone and manner that bespoke a person of condition, accepting my hospitality, but only on the condition that I myself should remain, for I had made a gesture indicative of departure. The younger, with a veil closely drawn across her face, curtsied without speaking. I at once acceded, and placing chairs for my guests, requested them to be seated.

The waiter at length made his appearance to say dinner was ready, "whenever monsieur desired it." This was a new difficulty, and I really felt much embarrassed by it. Resolving, however, to adopt the bold course, I hastily apologised for the great liberty I was about to take; and after briefly explaining the departure of the two friends I had expected, begged they

would allow me to believe that Fortune had really been kind to me for once, in replacing them.

A sign of half-impatience by the younger was speedily corrected by the other, as she said,—

“Monsieur forgets that we are strangers to each other.”

But there was nothing like rebuke in the tone she spoke in; but rather, as I thought, a suggestive hint thrown out to provoke some effort at explanation on my part. I was right in this conjecture, as I speedily saw by the degree of attention she vouchsafed me.

Perhaps if I had had a better cause, I should not have pleaded so successfully. I mean, that if I had been really the owner of a high name and station, it is just possible I might not so ably have combated the difficulty of the situation.

“At all events,” said the elder lady, “monsieur has one advantage; he knows who we are.”

“I shame to say, madame,” said I, bowing low, “that in my ignorance of Paris, I have not that honour.”

“Indeed!” cried she, half incredulously.

“It is quite true, madame, I have been but a few days here, and have no acquaintance whatever.”

They now spoke to each other for a few seconds: and after what seemed strong persuasion, the younger turned away to remove her bonnet.

“We have, then, no right to exact any concession from monsieur,” said the elder lady, “seeing that we preserve our own secret.”

I could not but assent to this doctrine, and had just acknowledged it, when the younger turned abruptly round, uttering a half cry of amazement,

“Margot!” exclaimed I—for it was she. But already had she buried her face between her hands, and refused to look up.

“What means this?” said the elder, sternly, to me. “Do you know this young lady?”

“I did so once, madame,” said I, sorrowfully.

“Well sir?” replied she, proudly, and as if desiring me to finish my speech.

“Yes, madame. I knew her as a child in her grandfather’s house. I was scarcely more than a boy myself at the time; but had the interval been four times as great, I could not forget all that I owe to his kindness and to hers.”

I could scarcely utter the last words from emotion. The child Margot—a beautiful woman, graceful and fascinating—now stood before me, changed but still the same: her dark eyes

darker and more meaning; her fair brow expanded and more lofty.

"You know my story?" asked she, in a low soft voice.

"Yes, Margot. And oftentimes in my saddest hours have I sought excitement and relief in the thought of your triumphs——"

"There, child—there!" exclaimed the elder, enthusiastically, "there is, at least, one who can prize the glorious ambitions of the scene, and knows how to appreciate the successes of high art. Stand not abashed before him, child; he comes not here as your accuser."

"Is it so, indeed?" cried Margot, entreatingly.

"Oh! if you but knew, Margot, how proudly I have often pondered over our hours of the past—now fancying that in my teachings of those days some germ of that high ambition you have tried to reach may then have been dropped into your heart—now wondering if, in your successes, some memory of me might have survived. If you but knew this, Margot, you would soon see how this bright moment of our meeting repays all the sorrows of a life-long."

"I am in the third act of the drama," said the elder lady, smiling. "Pray let me into the secret of the piece. Where, when, and how were you first acquainted?"

Margot looked at me to speak; but I returned her glance so entreatingly, that, taking her friend's hand between her own, she seated her at her side, and began.

While she narrated the story of our first meeting, I had full time to look at her, and see the changes a few years had made. Beautiful as she had been in childhood, far more lovely was she now in the grace of developed beauty. Her art, too had cultivated expression to its very highest point, yet without exaggerating a trait of her features; the tones of her voice had in them a melody I had never heard before; and I hung on her very utterance as though it were music!

I dare not trust myself to recall more of that scene: already are emotions struggling within me, the conflict of which this poor shattered heart is not equal to. The great trials of life are often easier burdens to memory than some flitting moment of passionate existence, some one brief hour of mingled hope and fear.

Margot's friend—it was Mademoiselle Mars herself—felt the liveliest interest in the story of our first meeting, my boyish duel, and—why should I not say it?—my boyish love. She took pleasure in hearing of every indication of that genius in

infancy which she had seen so splendidly displayed in womanhood, and asked me for traits of Margot's childhood with the greatest eagerness.

Margot—the first excitement over—seemed sad and dispirited; she even showed impatience once or twice, as Madlle. Mars insisted on hearing some little incident of childhood, and then abruptly said;—

“And you, Monsieur, how has the world treated you since we met?”

“Not so flatteringly; I am not spoiled by Fortune.”

“Nor am I,” said she, hastily taking up my words.

“No, dearest, that you are not,” cried the other. “You are as first I knew you, generous, warm-hearted, and kind.”

“I mean,” said Margot, “that these successes have not made me vain nor proud; that I know how to esteem them at their true price, and feel, moreover, how in my heart there lives a spirit above all this loud-tongued flattery.”

Madlle. Mars looked at me while she spoke, and I thought that her eyes conveyed the strangest meaning. There was admiration, indeed, but blended with something of tender pity and compassion. What would I not have given to have been able to read this glance aright! No time was given me to think on the theme, for Margot now, with a kind of half impetuous curiosity, asked me for my adventures.

“Tell us all—everything,” said she, laughingly—“your successes, your failures, your hopes, your loves, your joys, and sorrows. I am eager to hear if Fortune has not dealt more generously by you than me. This splendid preparation here”—and she pointed to the dinner-table—“would seem to say much.”

“The story will tell better at table,” said I, gaily, and not sorry to relieve the awkwardness of the moment by any new incident; and with this I ordered dinner at once. As course succeeded course of the magnificent repast, I could not help feeling what a singular preface was all this splendour to the confession that was to follow it, and how oddly would it tell, that the host of such a feast was without a sous in the world. Our spirits rose as dinner went on. We talked together like old friends, who had met yesterday; we discussed passing topics—all the news of the day—lightly and amusingly; we jested and laughed, with all the light-hearted gaiety of unburdened spirits; nor can I remember anything more brilliant than the flow of wit and pleasantry that went on amongst us.

What strange mysterious link unites our lowest moment of

despair with a wild and almost headlong joyousness, making of the darkness of our souls a fitting atmosphere for the lightning-play of fancy and the bright coruscations of wit! But an hour back, and never was depression deeper than my own; and now my brain abounded with bright-hued thoughts and pleasant imaginings.

It was late when the carriage arrived, and we returned to Paris, to finish the evening at Madlle. Mars' lodgings in the Rue de Choiseul. The little *salons*, furnished with a consummate taste and elegance, were crowded with visitors, as we reached them. Artists, authors, musicians, theatrical people of every kind and sort, with a sprinkling of the higher world, admitted as a rare favour to these "Saturdays."

It was in the fascination of this very class of society that Margot had originally conceived her passion for the stage. It was in their enthusiasm for her genius and their admiration of her beauty, she had first tasted the ambitious longing for fame and applause; and it was still here that she revelled, as in a charmed existence—here sought the inspirations that quickened her spirit to its proudest darings, and nerved her heart for efforts almost beyond human strength.

I had but to see her for a moment in the midst of this adulation to comprehend the whole history of her life. The poet brought his verses, the musician his strains, the sculptor laid his own image of herself at her feet; the most rapturous verses the most polished flatteries met her as she entered. Madlle. Mars herself swelled the chorus of these praises, and seemed prouder in the triumphs of her *protégé* than she had ever been in her own. Margot accepted all this homage as a queen might have done. She received it as a tribute that was due, and of which none dared to defraud her. Shall I own that if at first a modest humility and a girlish diffidence had been more gratifying to me to witness, yet, as the hours wore on, not only had I accustomed myself to bear with, but I actually felt myself joining in that same spirit of adulation which seemed so meetly offered at this shrine?

What sad repinings, what terrible self-reproaches come over me as I write these lines! My thoughts all turn to the very darkest, and yet the most brilliant moment of my life: the brightest in all its actual splendour and delight—the gloomiest in its dreary memory! Lest these fancies should master me, I will pursue my story rapidly, coldly, apathetically, if I may. I will not suffer a word, if I can help it, to escape me that may unman me for my task, now all but completed. I suppose that

no man can write of himself without becoming more or less his own apologist. Even in his self-accusings there will be mingled a degree of commiseration, and his judgments will be found tempered with merciful considerations. I would that I were capable of something better, bolder, and more manly than this. I would that others might learn of my "shortcomings," and be taught by my "over-reachings!" But though I cannot point the moral, I will tell the tale.

Margot—it was the caprice of the moment—presented me to the society as her cousin. I was the Chevalier de Bertin, of good family, and ample fortune. "Passionnée pour les arts," as she said, "and the devoted slave of genius." The introduction was well calculated to ensure me a favourable reception; and so it proved. I was at once admitted into all the masonry of the craft. The "coulisses" of every theatre were open to me; the private box of the prima donna, the editorial sanctum, the dressing-room where the great actress received her chosen few, and the little supper-table, at which a place would have been a boon to royalty—all were mine. To support myself, and maintain a condition proportionate to my pretended rank, I laboured immensely. I wrote for no less than four of the great journals of Paris. I was the leading political writer in the Bonapartist *Presse*, the royalist in the *Gazette de la Vendée*, and the infuriated defender of the Girondins in the terrible columns of *Le Drapeau de Pays*, theatrical and literary criticism being my walk in the pages of the *Avant Scène*.

Two persons only were in my secret. Sanson, the sub-editor of the *Presse*, and Jostard, who was a royalist agent, and who paid with a liberal hand all the advocates of the Bourbons. My intimate knowledge of the secret history of party, my acquaintance with political characters personally, and above all, my information on England and English topics, gave me enormous advantages, and many of my contributions were attributed to persons high in political station, and speaking the sentiments of authority. I was well versed in the slashing insolence of the military style in which the Bonapartists wrote, and knew all the cant of the Jesuit, as well as the chosen phraseology of the wildest republican. In this way I attacked and replied to myself, vindictively, and even savagely. Assault and counter-attack, insulting demands, and still more insulting replies, issued forth each morning, to amaze the capital, and make men ask, how long could such a polemic be sustained without personal vengeance?

In my Bonapartist capacity I assailed Pitt unceasingly. It

was the theme of which that party never wearied, and in which all their hatred to England could be carried without openly wounding the susceptibilities of the nation. If I assailed the covert treachery of the English minister by the increased activity in the dockyards during a state of peace, I hailed that very sign in a Bourbonist article as an evidence that the cause of the exiled family had not been abandoned in Great Britain. While in the *Drapeau*, I turned attention to the glorious struggle for freedom then sustained by the blacks of St. Domingo, under the chivalrous guidance of Toussaint, openly declaring that with the negro lay at that moment the whole destiny of all Europe.

One of these articles—I wrote it half wild with the excitement of a supper at the Rue Choiseul; I came home nearly distracted by a quarrel with a Martogard—I cannot continue—was headed “Noir au Blanc,” and was an insulting comparison between “Negro Chivalry and the White Man’s Subserviency.” An outrageously insolent contrast of Bonaparte with Toussaint closed the paper, and occasioned a police visit to the office of the journal, demanding the name and address of the writer. Of these the editor knew nothing, and though he succeeded in establishing his innocence, the journal was declared to be suppressed, and a heavy fine imposed upon its conductors. I was resolved, at whatever sacrifice, to pay this, and consulted with Sanson how best to set about it. My receipts at that time were as follows:—From the *Presse* sixty francs daily; fifty from the *Vendée*; the theatrical journal paid me one hundred weekly; and the *Drapeau*, up to the time of its suppression, forty francs for every article, irrespective of its length. In a word, each day’s revenue averaged above a hundred and fifty francs, which it was my custom to spend to the last sous piece.

To sustain the character of wealth and fortune, I not only toiled without ceasing, but I entered on a career of extravagance almost as distasteful to me. Margot loved display of every kind. The theatrical passion seemed to suggest a desire for every species of notoriety; and to please her I set up a costly equipage, with showy liveries and magnificent horses. The dinners I gave were of the most extravagant kind; the bouquets I presented to her each evening at the theatre would have in their price supported a family. My earnings could never have compassed such outlay, and to meet it I became a gambler—a practised, a professional gambler—playing with all the calm-headed skill of a deep calculator. Fortune vacillated; but, on the whole, I was a large winner. The fine decreed against the

Drapeau was fifteen thousand francs—a large sum for me, and far above what any effort at accumulation could possibly compass. So, indeed, Sanson told me, and laughed at the bare thought of my attempting it. There was, however, he said, a possibility—a mere possibility—of a way to meet this, and he would think over it. I gave him a day or two, and at the end of that time he told me his plan. It was this. There was a certain minister high in the confidence of Bonaparte, whose counsels had not been always followed, nor even listened to at times. These counsels had been founded on the assumption that certain views and intentions of a particular kind were maintained by the royalists—secretly maintained, but still occasionally shadowed forth in such a way as to be intelligible to all in the secrets of the party. To be plain, the suspected plan was neither more nor less than a union of the royalist with the republican faction to overthrow the Bonapartists. This idea seemed so chimerical to Bonaparte, that to broach it was at once to lose character with him for acuteness or political foresight. Not so to him of whom Sanson spoke, and whom I at once pronounced to be Fouché.

“Then you are mistaken,” said he; “but to any other guess I will make no reply, nor if you press me on this subject, will I consent to continue the negotiation.”

I yielded to his terms; and after a brief interval came an order for me to hold myself in readiness on a particular evening, when a carriage would be sent to fetch me to the house of the minister. At eight, the hour indicated, I was ready; and scarcely had the clock struck when the carriage rolled into the courtyard.

I have been led, as it were by accident, into the mention of this little incident, which had no bearing nor influence on my future; but now that I have touched upon it, I will finish it as briefly as I can.

I was received in a small office-like chamber by a man somewhat past middle life, but whose appearance gave him the look of even age. He was short, broad-shouldered, and slightly stooped; the figure altogether vulgar, but the head massive and lofty, and the face the strangest mixture of dignity and cunning—a blending of the high-bred gentleman with the crafty pettifogger—I ever beheld. He received me courteously, and at once opened the business for which we met. After some compliments on the vigour of my articles in the *Presse*, he proceeded to ask what my peculiar opportunities might be for knowing the secret intentions of the two great parties who opposed the government.

My replies were guarded and reserved ; seeing which, he at once said,—

“ This information is to be recompensed ? ”

I bowed coldly, and only replied that, if he would put distinct questions to me, I should endeavour to answer them.

After some little fencing on both sides, he asked me for the writer of the leading articles in the *Drapeau*—his name and position in life.

For reasons that may be guessed I declined to reveal these. A similar question as to the *Gazette* met a similar reply. Undeterred by these refusals, he asked me my opinion of these writers' abilities, and the likelihood of their being available to the cause of the government, under suitable circumstances.

I spoke half slightly of their talents, but professed implicit trust in their integrity. He turned the conversation then towards politics, and discussed with me the questions on which I had been writing so earnestly, both for and against, in the two opposing journals. The tone of virulent abuse of both was great ; and I half hinted that a personal *amende* was, perhaps, the point to which my opponent, and, as well myself, were tending. He smiled slightly, but meaningly.

“ That opinion is not yours, then, sir ? ” asked I.

“ Certainly not,” said he, blandly. “ Monsieur Bertin of the *Presse* will not seek satisfaction from Monsieur Bertin of the *Drapeau*—still less of Monsieur Bertin of the *Gazette*, whom he holds in such slight esteem.”

“ How, sir ! Do you mean to imply that I am the writer in all these journals ? ”

“ You have just told me so, sir,” said he, still smiling ; “ and I respect the word of a gentleman. The tone of identity assumed on paper is exactly that you have yourself put on when advocating any of these lines of policy. I suspected this from the first ; now I know it. Ah, Monsieur Bertin, you are in the mere nursery of craftiness—not but I must admit you are a very promising child of your years.”

Far from presuming on his discovery, he spoke more kindly and more confidentially than ever to me : asked my reasons for this opinion and for that, and seemed to think that I must have studied the questions I wrote on deeply and maturely. There was nothing like disparagement in his tone towards me, but, on the contrary, an almost flattering appreciation of my ingenuity as a writer.

“ Still, Monsieur Bertin,” said he, with affected gravity, “ the

Drapeau went too far—that you must allow; and for your sake as for ours it is better it should be suppressed. The fine shall be paid, but it must appear to have come from the Royalists—can I trust you for this?”

He looked at me calmly, but steadily as he spoke; and certainly I felt as if any deceit, should I desire it, were perfectly impossible before him. He did not wait for my reply, but with a seriousness that savoured of sincerity said,—

“The press in France at this moment is the expression of this man or that, but it is no more. We live in a period of too much change to have anything like a public opinion; so that what is written to-day is forgotten to-morrow. Yet with all that, the people must be taught to have one religion of the State as they have one of the Church, and heresies of either kind must be suppressed. Now, Monsieur Bertin, my advice to you is, be of the good fold—not alone because it is good, but because it is likely to be permanent. Continue to write for the *Gazette*. When you want information, Sanson will procure it for you; but you must not come here again. Temper your Royalist zeal with a seeming regard for your personal safety. Remember that a gentleman gives larger recognizances than a *sans-culottes*; and above all, keep in mind, that you serve us better in those columns than in our own. *C'est de la haute politique, de faire combattre ses ennemis pour soi.*”

He repeated this sentiment twice over, and then with a courteous gesture dismissed me. I was now in the secret pay of the Government—no regular allowance made me, but permitted to draw freely; and when any occasion of real information offered, to pay largely for it.

Had time been given me for reflection, I believe I should have abhorred myself for the life I now led. It was one course of daily trick and deception. In society I was a spy—in secret, a traitor. Trusted by all, and false to all, I hurried along in a headlong career of the wildest excitement. To enable me to write, I had recourse to various stimulants; and from one excess to another I became a confirmed opium-eater. I had by habit acquired a degree of nervous irritability that almost defied sleep. For days and days frequently I took no other rest than an occasional half-hour's repose when overcome, and then back to the desk again—if not refreshed, at least rallied. The turmoil and confusion of my thoughts at any chance interval of quiet was terrific. So long as I was in action all went well; when my brain was overworked, and my faculties stretched to their extreme tension, the excitement

sustained me, and I could develop whatever there was in me of intellectual power. The effort over, and my task accomplished, I became almost bereft of life: a trance-like lethargy seized me; my voice failed, my sight and hearing grew dulled, and I would lie thus, sometimes for hours, scarcely breathing, indifferent to everything.

When I rallied from these seizures, I hurried off to Margot, either to her home or to the theatre. To see her, to speak to her, even to hear her, was enough to call me back once more to life and the love of life. There was that in her own career, with all its changes and vicissitudes, that seemed to fashion her mind into moods similar to my own. On one day she would be to me like a sister—kind and warmly affectionate; on another, she would be as though I were her accepted lover, and show me all the tender interest of one whose fate was bound up with my own; and, perhaps, the very next meeting she would receive me coldly and distrustfully, and darkly hint that my secret life was known to her.

These were to me moments of intense agony. To see through them was worse than any death, and the very dread of them made existence a perfect torture. Till I had seen her, I never knew, each day, in what mood she might feel towards me; and if I revelled in the heaven of her smiles, felt her deep glances descending into my very heart, and thrilled with ecstasy at each word she uttered, suddenly there would come the thought that this was but a dream, and that to-morrow would be the dreadful awaking!

Her conduct was inexplicable, for it changed sometimes within the compass of a few hours, and from warmest confidence would become the most chilling reserve. She would pour out her whole heart before me; tell me how barren were all the triumphs she had achieved; how remote from happiness was this eternal struggle for fame; how her nature yearned for one true, unchanging devotion; how this mockery of passion made shipwreck of all real feeling, and left the nature worn out, wearied, and exhausted. She would, perhaps, at our next meeting efface all thought of this confidence by some passionate burst of enthusiasm for the stage, and some bold apostrophe to the glory of a great success—scornfully contrasting such a moment with the whole happiness of a life spent in obscurity. I own that in these outbursts of her wildest imagination, her beauty of expression attained its highest excellence. Her dark eyes flashed with the fire of an inspired nature, and her whole figure seemed imbued with a

more than mortal loveliness; while in her softer moods there was a sad and plaintive tenderness about her that subdued the spirit, and made her seem even more worthy of love than she had been of admiration. These fitful changes, which at first were only displayed in private, became after a while palpable to the public eye. On one night she would thrill an audience with horror, and in the power of her delineations make the very sternest natures yield to terror. At another, she would shock the public by some indifference to the exigencies of the scene, walk through her part in listless apathy, and receive with calm unconcern the ill-disguised disapproval of the spectators. At such times praise or blame were alike to her; she seemed like one labouring under some pressure of thought too engrossing to admit of any attention to passing objects; and in this dreary pre-occupation she moved like one spell-bound and entranced.

To allude to these passing states of mind after they had occurred was sure to give her deep offence; and although, for a while, I dared to do this, yet I saw reason to abandon the attempt, and maintain silence like the rest. The press, with less delicacy, expressed severe censure on what they characterized as an insulting appreciation of the public; and boldly declared that the voices which had made could still unmake a reputation, and that the lesson of contempt might soon pass from behind the footlights to the space before them.

It was both my province to keep these criticisms from her eye, and to answer them in print; and for a while I succeeded. I wrote, I argued, I declaimed—now casuistically expressing praise of what in my heart I condemned—now seeming to discover a hidden meaning where none existed. I even condescended to appeal to the indulgence of the public, in favour of those whose efforts were not always under their own control, and whose passing frames of sorrow or sickness must incapacitate them at seasons from embodying their own great conceptions. So sensitive had she become on the subject of remark, that the slightest allusion to her health was now resented as an offence, and even Mdlle. Mars dared not to say that she looked paler or thinner, or in better or worse spirits—so certain would any allusion of the kind be to displease her.

This irritability gradually widened and extended itself to everything. The slightest sign of inattention of the audience—any movement in the house while she was acting—a want of ability in those *en scène* with her—an accidental error in even their costume—gave umbrage; and she would stop in her part,

and only by an effort seem able to recover herself, and continue. These evidences of indifference to public opinion—for so were they construed—gradually arrayed against her nearly the entire force of the press.

They who had been her most devoted admirers, now displayed all their zeal in the discovery of her faults. The very excellences they had once extolled, they now censured as stage-trickery and deceit. One by one, they despoiled her of every qualification for art, save her beauty; and even that, they said, already proclaimed its perishable nature. My heart sickens as I think over the refined cruelty of these daily attacks—the minute and careful anatomy of humanity, studied to inflict misery! To stem this torrent of opinion, I devoted myself alone. Giving up all other writing, I thought only of Margot and her cause. I assailed her critics with the foulest abuse. I aspersed their motives, and not unfrequently their lives. I eagerly sought out circumstances of their private habits and actions, and proclaimed them to the world, as the men who dared to teach the expressions by which virtues should be rendered, and of whose very existence they were ignorant. I contrasted their means of judgment with their daily lives. I exhibited them as mean hirelings, the cowardly bravos of a degenerate age; and, of course—for Paris was always the same in this respect—various duels were fastened on me for my insolence.

My skill at the sword exercise carried me safely through many of these encounters. My recklessness of life may, perhaps, have served to preserve it, for I was utterly reckless of it! My neglect of politics, and all interest about them, procured my dismissal from the Government journal. The *Vendée* soon followed the example; and although the violence of my articles in the *Avant Scène* had for a time amused the town, the editors told me that my defence of Mdle. Margot had now been carried far enough, and that I should look elsewhere for a new topic.

Not a few of Margot's warmest admirers condemned the ill-advised zeal of my advocacy. Some even affirmed that much of her unpopularity had its origin in my indiscreet defence. I was coldly told I had "written too much." One said I had "fought too often." The fastidious public—which acknowledged no sincerity, nor would recognize such a thing as truth—condemned, as bad taste, the excesses into which my heartfelt indignation had hurried me. Mdle. Mars was a half convert to this opinion; I shuddered one day, as I suspected that even Margot seemed to entertain it. I had been pressing her

to do something—a mere trifle—to which she dissented. I grew eager, and at last insisted; when, looking at me steadily for some seconds, she said,—

“Has it never occurred to you that over-zeal is apt to defeat itself, from the very suspicion that it excites, that there may be a deeper motive than that which meets the eye?”

The words smote me to the heart. They were the death-knell to all the hope that had sustained me through my long struggle; and though I tried to read them in various ways less wounding to my feelings, one terrible signification surmounted all the others, and seemed to proclaim itself the true meaning. What if it were really so? was the dreadful question that now struck me. What if I had been the cause of her downfall? The thought so stunned me that I sat powerless under the spell of its terror—a terror which has tempered every hour of life, from that day to this.



CHAPTER XLIII.

A PASSAGE IN THE DRAMA.

ONE of the noted characters about Paris at this time was a certain Captain Fleury; he called himself "Fleury de Montmartre." He had been, it was said, on Bonaparte's staff in Egypt, but got into disgrace by having taken Kleber's side, in the differences between the two generals. Disgusted with the service in which he saw no prospect of promotion, he quitted the army, and came to live in Paris, as some thousands live there, no one can tell how, or in what manner. His chief, if not only, occupation seemed to be the frequenting of all the low gambling-houses, where, however, he rarely was seen to play, but rather waited for the good fortune which befell some other, with whom he either dined, or succeeded in borrowing a few francs. Less reputable habits than even these were likewise attributed to him—it was said that he often thrust quarrels upon people at the tables, which he afterwards compromised for money, many preferring to pay rather than risk an encounter with a professed duellist.

In his threadbare military frock, and shabby hat, with broken boots and ragged gloves, he still maintained the semblance of his former condition, for he was eminently good-looking, and, in gait and bearing, every inch a soldier. I had made his acquaintance by an accident. I happened to have let fall beside my chair a bank note for one hundred francs, one night at play. The waiter hurried after me to restore it, just as I was descending the stairs with this Captain Fleury at my side. I was not aware of my loss, and insisted that the money could not be mine. The waiter was equally positive, and appealed to the Captain to decide the question. Fleury, instead of replying, took out a much worn pocket-book, and proceeded to examine its contents.

"I'll wager as much," cried I, "that this gentleman is the owner of the note."

"And you would win, sir," said Fleury, taking it from the

waiter's reluctant fingers, and carefully enclosing it within his case.

The waiter never uttered a syllable, but, with a look that revealed an entire history, bowed and retired. I complimented the Captain on the good fortune of his presence in such a critical moment, touched my hat to him, and departed.

It was only the next morning that I recollected the sum of money I had had about me, and perceived that the note must have been my own. It was of course too late to think of repairing the loss, but I was far from desiring to do so. The man's appearance had interested me; I was deeply struck by the signs of poverty in his dress, and only happy to have had this slight occasion to serve him, without any infringement on his self-respect. It was, indeed, a question I often debated with myself, whether or not he really believed that he was the owner of the note.

From that day forth we saluted whenever we met; and if, by any chance, we came together, we exchanged the usual courtesies of acquaintance. There was a degree of pleasure afforded him by even this much of recognition, from one whose air betokened more prosperous circumstances, that I gladly yielded. I had known even harder fortune than his, and could well understand the importance he might attach to such a trifle.

By degrees I began to feel a strange kind of interest for this man—so calm, so self-possessed as he seemed in the midst of scenes of passionate and violent excitement. What signified any sudden reverse of fortune, thought I, in comparison with the daily misery of such a lot as his? And yet day after day I saw him unmoved and tranquil; he came and went like one to whom all the vicissitudes of life brought no emotion. He was a study for me, whether I met him at the play-table or the restaurant, or saw him at night in the theatre in his accustomed spot, close to the orchestra, where, with folded arms and bent brows, he stood the entire night without moving. I watched him closely during that terrible week when, each night of Margot's appearance, the conflict of public opinion grew stronger and stronger, when, as her enemies gained strength, her former friends either gathered in little despairing knots together, or abandoned the field in defeat. I thought, or rather I seemed to feel, that this man's eyes were fixed upon me oftentimes, when I was not looking at him. I had a strange sense of consciousness that, affect what bearing I might, he was reading my secret thoughts at his leisure, and conning over traits of my character. Whenever any momentary burst of disapprobation

from the audience had made me fall back in shame and anger within my box, I could feel that his eyes were following me with a glance of persecuting keenness.

Margot's enemies were triumphant; they came each night in crowds, and, by a hundred contrivances of insult, displayed their bitter and undying hatred of her. The leader of the party was a Vicomte Dechaine, whose mistress was the rival of Margot, if even third-rate powers could aspire to contend with genius such as hers! Her friend, it was said, had organized the entire conspiracy, and being a rich man, his purse and his influence were powerful allies. At his supper-table, the writers of the papers, the young fashionables of society, and the professed critics who swayed public taste, were said to meet and concert their measures. Their victory cost them less than they had ever anticipated. Margot's own indiscretions—I have no other word for them—had worked faster for her ruin than all their bitterest animosity. It was not a mere indifference to public opinion she displayed—it was a downright contempt for it. If they censured any peculiarity of expression—a pause, or a gesture—she was sure not only to repeat, but even exaggerate it. Did any detail of her costume excite reproof, she at once assumed it as a reason for maintaining it. In a word, it seemed that all the arts others employ to win praise and secure popularity, were used by her to show her utter disdain of the world's opinion, and this, too, in a career where such opinion is the law, and where there exists no appeal against it.

To restrain this spirit, even to moderate it, her friends utterly failed. She, who once heard even the humblest with deference, and accepted suggestions with a degree of humility, now rejected all counsel and guidance, and boldly proclaimed herself the only competent judge of what regarded her. A frequent subject of censure amongst her critics was a habit she had fallen into, of pressing both hands to her temples in moments of intense passion. The gesture was not alone ungraceful, but from its frequency it became, in a measure, a trick; and this they assailed with a degree of virulence far out of proportion to the offence. Mdlle. Mars counselled her to guard against any mannerism, and mentioned this one in illustration. Margot—once the very emblem of obedience to her gifted friend—resented the advice with angry indignation, and flatly declared that her own inspirations were her best advisers.

In the temper she had now assumed, it may be imagined how difficult had all intercourse with her become. Her waywardness increased as the public favour declined; and she who once

might have been permitted to indulge any caprice, was now rigidly denied even the commonest liberty. At first, the hardest task was to blind her to the censures the press was heaping upon her. Now, however, a new difficulty arose. It was to hint that she no longer could count upon the fickle favour of the multitude, and that the hour of her triumph had gone by.

At moments, it is true, in some scenes of intense passion, where a deep emotion of the soul was to find its utterance in a few broken words, a cry, or, perhaps, a look, her wonderful genius shone forth still; and, surmounting all the prejudices of sworn enemies, the theatre would burst forth into one of those thundering peals of applause that sound like the very artillery of human feeling. Such a passage was there in *Bajazet*. It is the scene where Roxalane listens to the warm protestations of her lover, of whose perfidy she is assured, and whom she herself overheard declaring that his love for her was little other than compassion. For a few seconds the words of adoration seemed to act on her like a spell. She drinks them eagerly and madly; her eyes sparkle; her bosom heaves; her half-opened lips seem, as it were, to catch the accents, when suddenly the truth flashes across her. Her colour flies—her face becomes livid in its paleness. A terrible shudder shakes her frame. She snatches her hand from his grasp, and turns him a look of loathing, contemptuous aversion, such as actually sickens the very heart to behold!

From, I know not what caprice, she disliked this part now, although once it had been her favourite above all others. Her friends made every effort to induce her to resume it, but in vain. Their entreaties, indeed, only served to excite her opposition; and the subject was at last dropped as hopeless. The Court, however, had fixed on a night to visit the "Français," and *Bajazet* was their choice. There was now no alternative left her but to accept her part, or see it filled by another. The latter was her immediate resolve; and Mdlle. Leonie, her rival, was at length installed in all the honours of the "first character." It was evident now to all Margot's friends that her career was over. An act of abdication like this was always irrevocable; and the Parisian public was never known to forgive what they regarded as an open act of insult to their authority in taste. Well knowing that all attempts at dissuasion would be hopeless, we made no appeal against her determination, but in calm submission waited for the course of events—waited, in fact, to witness the last crash of ruin to that fame in whose edifice we once had gloried.

Mdlle. Mars advised Margot to travel. Italy had been always the land of her predilection. She had even acted there with immense success in Alfieri's tragedies, for her knowledge of the language equalled that of her own country. It would be a good opportunity to revisit it; "and perhaps, who knew," said she, "but that the echo of her fame coming over the Alps might again rouse the enthusiasm of Paris in her favour?" I warmly supported this plan, and Margot consented to it. A *dame de compagnie*, an old friend of Mdlle. de Mars, was chosen to be her travelling companion, and I was to be of the party as secretary.

We hurried on all the arrangements as rapidly as possible. We desired that she should leave Paris before the night of the command, and thus remove her from all the enthusiasm of praise the press had prepared to shower down on her rival, with the customary expressions of contemptuous contrast for the fallen idol. We well knew the excess of adulation that was in readiness to burst forth, and dreaded less the effect it might produce on Margot's mind regarding her rival, than that it should inspire her with a curiosity to witness her performance, for such was exactly the wayward character of her mode of thinking and acting.

To our joy we discovered that Margot's impatience equalled, if not exceeded, our own. She entered with an almost childish delight into all the preparations for the journey. We hung over the map for hours together, tracing our route, and revelling in anticipated pleasure at the thought of all those glorious old cities of the Peninsula. We consulted guide-books and journals, and pictured to ourselves all the delights of a happy journey. With what ecstasy she recalled the various scenes of her former visit to Italy, and the names of those whose friendship she had acquired, and with whom she longed to make me acquainted! In her enthusiasm she seemed to recover her long-lost buoyancy of heart, and to be of the same gay and happy nature I had known her. I dare not trust myself with more of these memories; they come upon me like the thought of those moments when, on a sick bed, some dear friend has uttered words to be treasured up for years long—words of promise, mayhap words of hope, for a future that was never to come—plans for a time that dark destiny had denied us!

Our arrangements were all completed—our passports procured, a courier engaged, and everything in readiness for the road. We were to set out on the following day. It was a Friday, and Margot's prejudices would not permit her to begin

a journey on such an inauspicious day. I reasoned with her and argued earnestly, for I remembered it was on that night Mdlle. Leonie was to appear at the Français. She was resolved, however, to have her way, and I gave in. No allusion to the theatre, nor to anything concerning it, had ever escaped either of us. By, as it were, a tacit understanding, each avoided the theme as one only suggestive of distressing memories; and then we had so many topics that were delightful to talk over.

I went out early in the morning to make some purchases—some trifling things we wanted for the road, and on my return I found Margot with flushed face and feverish look rapidly walking to and fro in the drawing-room. She tried to seem calm and composed as I entered—she even made jest of her own agitation, and tried to laugh it off as a weakness she was ashamed of; but her efforts were sad failures—her quivering lip and trembling accents showed that deep agitation was at work within her.

“I cannot tell you—I will not tell you what is the matter with me,” said she, at last; “it would but lead to some rash outbreak of your temper—the very last thing I could endure at such a time. No, no; let us go—let us leave Paris at once; to-day—now, if you wish it; I am ready.”

This was impossible; all our arrangements had been made, and horses ordered for the next day. My curiosity now became an agony, and I grew almost angry at her continued refusal to satisfy me; when at last, after exacting from me a solemn oath to do nothing, nor to take any step without her concurrence, she placed in my hands a letter, saying, “This came while you were out.”

It ran to this effect—

“The Vicomte Dechainé begs to offer to Mdlle. De La Veronie (Margot’s name in the theatre) his box at the Français for this evening, as it must doubtless be interesting to her to witness the performance of Roxalane, by one who labours under the double difficulty of her beauty and her reason. An answer will be called for.”

“You cannot expect me to endure this outrage, Margot!” cried I, trembling with passion; “you could not suppose that I can live under it?”

“I have your oath, sir,” said she, solemnly, and with a dignity that at once recalled me to myself.

“But if I am to drag out life, dishonoured and degraded

even to my own heart, Margot," said I, imploringly, "you surely would take pity on me!"

"And who would pity me, sir, were I to make you a murderer? No, no!" cried she, "you would have this secret—you insisted on it; show yourself worthy of this confidence, by keeping your solemn pledge. We leave this to-morrow; a few hours is not too much sacrifice for one who will give her whole life to you after."

As she spoke she fell into my arms, and sobbed as though her heart was breaking. As for me, my transports knew no bounds. I dropped at her feet—I vowed and swore a thousand times that not only my life, but that my fame, my honour, were all hers; that to deserve her there was no trial I would not dare. Oh, the glorious ecstasy of that moment comes back like a flood of youth once more upon this old and shattered heart; and, as I write these lines, the hot tears are falling on the paper, and my lips are murmuring a name I have not strength to write.

"I will put your loyalty to the test at once," said she, gaily, and with a degree of wild joyousness the very opposite to her late emotion. "Sit down there, and write as I dictate."

I obeyed, and she began——

"'Mdle. De La Veronie begs to acknowledge, with a gratitude suitable to the occasion, the polite note of the Vicomte Dechaine, and to accept——'"

"What!" cried I, dropping the pen.

"Go on," said she, calmly; "write as I tell you—'to accept his box this evening at the Français.'" "

"Margot, you are not in earnest?" said I, entreatingly.

"I am resolved, sir," said she, with a voice of determination, and a look of almost reproving sternness. "I hope it is not from you, at least, will come any doubts of my courage!"

These words seemed to indicate the spirit in which her resolution had been taken, and to show that she preferred accepting, as it were, this challenge, to the humbler alternative of an escape from it.

I wrote as she bade me, and despatched the letter.



CHAPTER XLIV.

THE PRICE OF FAME.

IF the triumphs of genius be amongst the most exalted pleasures of our nature, its defeats and reverses are also the very saddest of all afflictions. He who has learned to live, as it were, on the sympathies of his fellows—to be inspired by them at times, and inspire them at others—to feel his existence like a compact with the world, wherein he alternately gives and receives, cannot endure the thought of being passed over and forgotten. The loss of that favour in which, as in a sunshine, he basked, is a bereavement too great to be borne. He may struggle for a while against this depression—he may arm himself with pride against what his heart denounces as injustice—he may even deceive himself into a mock indifference of such judgments; but, do all he will, he comes at the last to see that his greatest efforts were prompted by the very enthusiasm they evoked—that the impression he produced upon others was like an image in a mirror, by which he could view the proportions of his mind, and that the flame of his intellect burned purest and brightest when fanned by the breath of praise.

It will be seen that I limit these observations to dramatic success—that I am only speaking of the stage and the actor. For him there is no refuge in the calmer judgment of posterity; there is no appeal to a dispassionate future. The value stamped upon him now is to be his fame for ever. No other measure of his powers can be taken than the effect he produced upon his contemporaries; and hence the great precariousness of a career wherein each passing mood of illness, sorrow, anxiety, or exhaustion may influence the character of a reputation that might seem established beyond reversal.

How leniently, then, should we deal with those who labour for our pleasure in these capacities! How indulgent should we show ourselves even to their caprices—justly remembering the arduous nature of a struggle in which so many requirements are summoned; and that genius itself is insufficient, if

there be not the vigour of health, the high promptings of ambition, and the consciousness of power that springs from unimpaired faculties.

I have come to think over these things with a sad heart. Within the circle of such memories lies enshrined the greatest sorrow of a life that has not been without its share of trials. I had intended to have revealed to my reader a painful incident, but I find that age has not yet blunted the acute misery of my feelings; nor can I, with all the weight of long years upon me, endure to open up again a grief whose impress has stamped every hour of existence. Let me not be supposed as uttering these words in any spirit of querulousness with fortune; I have had much, far more than most men, to feel grateful for. Well do I know, besides, that to my successes in life I can lay no claim in any merits or deservings of my own—that my shortcomings have been numerous, and leniently dealt with. I speak, therefore, not complainingly. I would not moreover, like to spend in repinings the last hours of a long life—the goal cannot well be distant now; and as, footsore and weary, I tread the few remaining miles of my earthly pilgrimage, I would rather cheer my heart with the prospect of rest before me, than darken the future with one shadow of the past.

Margot had insisted on remaining. She felt as though a challenge had been offered to her, and it would be cowardice to decline it. Over and over again was she wont to repeat to herself the contempt she felt for that applause in which it was believed she exulted. She burned, therefore, for a moment wherein she could display this haughty contempt, and throw back with proud disdain their homage, by showing herself as indifferent to rebuke as she had ever been to adulation. The day was passed in moods of silence, or paroxysms of the wildest excitement. After an hour or more perhaps of unbroken calm, she would burst forth into a passionate denunciation of the world's injustice, with bitter and poignant regrets for the hour when she became a suppliant for its favours. The proudest efforts she would make to rise above this were sure to be defeated by some sudden sense of defeat—an agonising conviction, that threw her into violent weeping; a state of suffering that even now I dread to think of.

She grew calmer towards evening, but it was a calm that terrified me—there was a slow and careful precision in every word she spoke that denoted effort; her smile, too, had a fixity in it that remained for seconds after the emotion which occasioned it; and while a stern and impassive quietude characterised

her expression generally, her eyes at times flashed and sparkled like the glaring orbs of a lioness. She descended to the drawing-room most magnificently attired—a splendid diamond tiara on her head, and a gorgeous bouquet of rubies and brilliants on the corsage of her dress. Although pale as death—for she wore no rouge—I had never seen her look so beautiful. There is a Titian picture of Pompey's daughter receiving the tidings of Pharsalia; and, while too proud to show her agony, is yet in the very struggle of a breaking heart—the face is like enough to have been her portrait, and even to the colour of the massive, waving hair, is wonderfully identical.

The play had already begun when we arrived at the theatre, and in the little bustle caused by our entry into the box, a half impatient expression ran through the audience; but as suddenly suppressed, it became a murmur of wondering admiration. The stage was forgotten, and every eye turned at once towards her who so often had moved their hearts by every emotion, and who now seemed even more triumphant in the calm self-possession of her beauty. Rank over rank leaned forward in the boxes to gaze at her, and the entire pit turned and stood, as it were, spell-bound at her feet. Had she wished for a triumph over her rival, she could not have imagined a more signal one; for none now directed their attention to the business of the play, but all seemed forgetful of everything save her presence. Margot appeared to accept this homage with the haughty consciousness of its being her due; her eyes ranged proudly over the dense crowd, and slowly turned away, as though she had seen nothing there to awaken one sentiment of emotion. There was less an expression of disdain than of utter indifference in her look—it was almost like the cold impassiveness of a statue.

For myself I am unable to speak. I saw nothing of the play or the actors. Margot, and Margot alone, filled my eyes; and I sat far back in the box. My glances revelled on her, watching with unceasing anxiety that pale and passionless face. In the fourth act comes the scene where Roxalane, aware of her lover's falsehood, hears him profess the vows that he but feigns to feel. It was the great triumph of Margot's genius—the passage of power in which she rose unapproachably above all others; and now, in the stilled and silent assembly might be noted the anxiety with which they awaited her rival's delineation. Unlike the cold, unmoved, and almost patient bearing which Margot displayed at first, as though, having schooled her mind to a lesson, she would practise it, had not aversion or

contempt overmastered her, and in the very sickness of her soul revealed her sorrow, the other burst forth into a wild and passionate declamation—an outburst of vulgar rage. A low murmur of discontent ran through the house, and, swelling louder and louder, drowned the words of the piece. The actress faltered and stopped; and, as if by some resistless impulse, turned towards the box where Margot sat, still and motionless. The entire audience turned likewise, and every eye was now bent on her whose genius had become so interwoven with the scene, that it was as though associated with her very identity. Slowly rising from her seat, Margot stood erect, gazing on that dense mass with the proud look of one who defied them. The same stern, cold stare of insult she had once bestowed on the stage, she now directed on the spectators. It was a moment of terrible interest, as thus she stood, confronting, almost daring, those who had presumed to condemn her; and then, in the same words Roxalane uses, she addressed them, every accent tremulous with passion, and every syllable vibrating with the indignant hate that worked within her. The measured distinctness of every word sang out clear and full. It was less invective than scornful, and scorn that seemed to sicken her as she spoke it.

The effect upon the audience will best evidence the power of the moment. On all sides were seen groups gathered around one who had swooned away. Many were carried out insensible, and fearful cries of hysteric passion betrayed the secret sympathies her words had smitten. She paused, and with that haughty gesture with which she takes eternal farewell of her lover, she seemed to say, "Adieu for ever!" and then pushing back her dark ringlets, and tearing away the diamond coronet from her brows, she burst into a fit of laughter. Oh! how terribly its very cadence sounded—sharp, ringing, and wild! the cry of an escaped intellect—the shriek of an intelligence that had fled for ever!

Margot was mad. The violent conflict of passion to which her mind was exposed, had made shipwreck of a glorious intellect, and the very exercise of emotion had exhausted the wells of feeling. I cannot go on. Already have these memories sapped the last foundations of my broken strength, and my old eyes are dimmed with tears.

The remainder of her life was passed in a little chateau near Sèvres, where Mademoiselle Mars had made arrangements for her reception. She lingered for three years, and died out, like one exhausted. As for me, I worked as a labourer in the

garden of the chateau to the day of her death ; and although I never saw her, the one thought that I was still near her sustained and supported me—not, indeed, with hope, for I had long ceased to hope.

I knew the window of the room she sat in ; and when, at evening, I left the garden, I knew it was the time she walked there. These were the two thoughts that filled up all my mind ; and out of these grew the day-dreams in which my hours were passed. Still fresh as yesterday within my heart are the sensations with which I marked a slight change in the curtain of her window, or bent over the impress of her foot upon the gravel. How passionately have I kissed the flowers that I hoped she might have plucked ! how devotedly knelt beside the stalks from which she had broken off a blossom !

These memories live still, nor would I wish it otherwise. In the tender melancholy, I can sit and ponder over the past, more tranquilly, maybe, than if they spoke of happiness.



CHAPTER XLV.

DARK PASSAGES OF LIFE.

FOR some years after the death of Margot my life was like a restless dream—a struggle, as it were, between reality and a strange scepticism with everything and every one. At moments a wish would seize me to push my fortune in the world—to become rich and powerful; and then as suddenly would I fall back upon my poverty, as the condition least open to great reverses, and hug myself in the thought that my obscurity was a shield against adverse fortune. I tried to school my mind to a misanthropy that might throw me still more upon myself, but I could not. Even in my isolated, friendless condition, I loved to contemplate the happiness of others. I could watch children for hours long at their play; and if the sounds of laughter or pleasant revelry came from a house as I passed at nightfall, my heart beat responsively to every note of joy, and in my spirit I was in the midst of them. I had neither home nor country, and my heart yearned for both. I felt the void like a desert, bleak and desolate within me; and it was in vain I endeavoured, by a hundred artifices, to make me suffice to myself. I came, at length, to think that it were better to attach myself to the world by even the interests of a crime, than to live on thus, separated and apart from all sympathy. In humble life, he who retreats from association with his fellows, must look to be severely judged. The very lightest allegation against him will be a charge of pride; and even this is no slight offence before such a tribunal. Vague rumours of worse will gain currency, and far weightier derelictions be whispered about him. His own rejection of the world now recoils upon himself, and he comes to discover that he has neglected to cultivate the sympathies which are not alone the ties of brotherhood between men, but the strong appeals to mercy, when mercy is needed.

By much reflection on these things, I was led to feel at last that nothing but a strong effort could raise me from the deep

depression I had fallen into ; that I should force myself to some pursuit which might awaken zeal or ambition within me ; and that, at any cost, I should throw off the hopeless, listless lethargy of my present life. While I was yet hesitating what course to adopt, my attention was attracted one morning to a large placard affixed to the walls of the Hôtel de Ville, and which set forth the tidings that "all men who had not served as soldiers, and were between the ages of fifteen and thirty, were to present themselves at the Prefecture at a certain hour of a certain day." The consternation this terrible announcement called forth may easily be imagined ; for, although only a very limited number of these would be drafted, yet each felt that the evil lot might be his own.

I really read the announcement with a sense of pleasure. It seemed to me as though fate no longer ignored my very existence, but had at length agreed to reckon me as one amongst the wide family of men. Nor was it that the life of a soldier held out any prize to my ambition ; I had never at any time felt such. It was the simple fact that I should be recognized by others, and no longer accounted a mere waif upon the shore of existence.

The conscription is a stern ordinance. Whatever its necessities, there is something painfully afflicting in every detail of its execution. The disruption of a home, and the awful terrors of a dark future, are sad elements to spread themselves over the peaceful monotony of a village life. Nor does a war contain anything more heartrending in all its cruel history than the tender episodes of these separations. I have the scene before me now, as I saw it on that morning, and a sadder sight I never have looked upon. The little village was crowded, not alone by those summoned by the conscription, but by all their friends and relations ; and as each new batch of twelve were marched forward within the gloomy portals of the Hôtel de Ville, a burst of pent-up sorrow would break forth, that told fearfully the misery around. But sad as was this, it was nothing to the scene that ensued when the lot had fallen upon some one well known and respected by his neighbours. He who had drawn the lowest number was enlisted, and instead of returning to join his fellows outside, never made his appearance till his hair had been closely cropped, and the addition of a tricoloured ribbon to his cap proclaimed him a soldier. Of these poor fellows some seemed stunned and stupified, looked vaguely about them, and appeared incapable to recognize friends or acquaintances. Some endeavoured to carry all off with an air

of swaggering recklessness, but in the midst of their assumed indifference natural feeling would burst forth, and scenes of the most harrowing misery be exhibited; and lastly, many came forth so drunk that they knew nothing either of what happened or where they were; and to see these surrounded by the friends who now were to take their last leave of them was indescribably painful.

Like most of those who care little for fortune, I was successful; that is, I drew one of the highest numbers, and was pronounced "exempt from service." There was not one, however, to whom the tidings could bring joy, nor was there one to whom I could tell the news with the hope of hearing a word of welcome in return. I was turning away from the spot, not sorry to leave a place so full of misery, when I came upon a group around a young man who had fainted, and been carried out for fresh air. He had been that moment enlisted, and the shock had proved over-much for him. Poor fellow! well might it—the same week saw him the happy father of his firstborn, and the sworn soldier of the empire. What a wide gulf separates such fortunes!

I pushed my way into the midst, and offered myself to take his place. At first none so much as listened to me; they deemed my proposal absurd; perhaps impossible. An old sergeant, who was present, however, thought differently, and measuring me calmly with his eye, left the spot. He returned soon, and beckoned me to follow. I did so. A few brief questions were put to me. I answered them, was desired to pass on to an inner room, where, in a file of some twenty strong, the chosen recruits were standing before a desk. A man rapidly repeated certain words, to which we were ordered to respond by lifting the right hand to the face. This was an oath of allegiance, and when taken we moved on to the barber, and in a few minutes the ceremony was completed, and we were soldiers of France.

I had imagined, and indeed I had convinced myself, that I was so schooled in adversity I could defy fortune. I thought that mere bodily privations and sufferings could never seriously affect me, and that, with the freedom of my own thoughts unfettered, no real slavery could oppress me. In this calculation I had forgotten to take count of those feelings of self-esteem which are our defences against the promptings of every mean ambition. I had not remembered that these may be outraged by the very same rules of discipline that taught us to fire and load, and march and manœuvre! It was a grievous error!

France was once more at war with all the world: her armies were now moving eastward to attack Austria, and more than mere menaces declared the intention to invade England. Fresh troops were called for with such urgency, that a fortnight or three weeks was only allowed to drill the new recruits and fit them for regimental duty. Severity compensated for the briefness of the time, and the men were exercised with scarcely an interval of repose. In periods of great emergency many things are done, which in days of calmer influences would not be thought of; and now the officers in command of dépôts exercised a degree of cruelty towards the soldiers, which is the very rarest of all practices in the French army; in consequence, desertions became frequent, and, worse again, men maimed and mutilated themselves in the most shocking manner, to escape from a tyranny more insupportable than any disease. It is known to all, that such practices assume the characteristics of an epidemic, and when once they have attained to a certain frequency, men's minds become familiarized to the occurrence, and they are regarded as the most ordinary of events. The regiment to which I was attached—the 47th of the line—was one of the very worst for such acts of indiscipline; and although the commanding officers had been twice changed, and one entire battalion broken up and reformed, the evil repute still adhered to the corps. It is a mistake to suppose that common soldiers are indifferent to the reputation of their regiment; even the least subordinate—those in whom military ardour is lowest, feel acutely, too, the stigma of a condemned corps. We had reason to experience this, on even stronger grounds. We were despatched to Brest, to garrison the prison, and hold in check that terrible race who are sentenced to the galleys for life. This mark of disgrace was inflicted on us as the heaviest stain upon a regiment openly pronounced unworthy to meet the enemies of France in the field.

This act seemed to consummate the utter degradation of our corps, from which, weekly, some one or other was either sentenced to be shot, or condemned to the even worse fate of a galley-slave. I shrink from the task of recalling a period so full of horror. It was one long dream of ruffian insubordination and cruel punishment. Time, so far from correcting, seemed to confirm the vices of this fated regiment; and at length a commission arrived from the ministry of war to examine into the causes of this corruption. This inquiry lasted some weeks; and amongst those whose evidence was taken, I was one. It chanced that no punishment had ever been inflicted on me in

the corps; nor was there a single mark in the "conduct roll" against my name. Of course, these were favourable circumstances, and entitled any testimony that I gave to a greater degree of consideration. The answers I returned, and the views I had taken, were deemed of consequence enough to require further thought. I was ordered to be sent to Paris, to be examined by General Caulincourt, at that time the head of the *etat major*.

It would little interest the reader to enter further into this question, to which I have only made allusion from its reference to my own fortunes. The opinions I gave, and the suggestions I made, attracted the notice of my superiors, and I received, as a reward, the grade of corporal, and was attached to the Chancellerie Militaire at Strasburg—a post I continued to occupy for upwards of two years. Two peaceful, uneventful years were they, and to look back upon, they seem but as a day.

The unbroken monotony of my life, the almost apathetic calm which had come over me, and my isolation from all other men, gave me the semblance of a despondent and melancholy nature; but I was far from unhappy, and had schooled myself to take pleasure in a variety of simple, uncostly pursuits, which filled up my leisure hours, and thus my little flower-garden, stolen from an angle of the glacis, was to me a domain of matchless beauty. Every spare moment of my time was passed here, and every little saving of my humble pay was expended on this spot. The rose, the clematis, and the jessamine here twined their twigs together to make an arbour, in which I used to sit at evening, gazing out upon the spreading Rhine, or watching the sunset on the Vosges mountains. I had trained myself not to think of the great events of the world, momentous and important as they then were, and great with the destiny of mankind. I never saw a newspaper—I held no intercourse with others; to me life had resolved itself into the very simplest of all episodes—it was mere existence, and no more.

This dream might possibly have ended without a waking shock, and the long night of the grave have succeeded to the dim twilight of oblivion, had not an event occurred to rouse me from my stupor, and bring me back to life and its troubles.

An order had arrived from Paris to put the fortress into a state of perfect defence. New redoubts and bastions were to be erected, the ditches widened, and an additional force of guns to be mounted on the walls. The telegraph had brought the news in the morning, and ere the sunset that same evening, my little garden was a desert; all my care and toil scattered to the

winds—the painful work of long months in ruin, and my one sole object in life obliterated and gone. I had thought that all emotions were long since dead within me. I fervently believed that every well of feeling was dry and exhausted in my nature; but I cried, and cried bitterly, as I beheld this desolation. There seemed to my eyes a wantonness in the cruelty thus inflicted, and in my heart I inveighed against the ruthless passions of men, and the depravity by which their actions are directed. Was the world too much a paradise for me, I asked, that this small spot of earth could not be spared to me? Was I over-covetous in craving this one corner of the vast universe? In my folly and my selfishness I fancied myself the especial mark of adversity, and henceforth I vowed a reckless front to fortune.

He who lives for himself alone, has not only to pay the penalty of unguided counsels, but the far heavier one of following impulses of which egotism is the mainspring. The care for others, the responsibilities of watching over and protecting something besides ourselves, are the very best of all safeguards against our own hearts. I have a right to say this.

From a life of quiet and orderly regularity, I now launched out into utter recklessness and abandonment. I formed acquaintances with the least reputable of my comrades, frequented their haunts, and imitated their habits. I caught vice as men catch a malady. It was a period little short of insanity, since every wish was perverted, and every taste the opposite of my real nature. I, who was once the type of punctuality and exactness, came late and irregularly to my duties. My habits of sobriety were changed for waste, and even my appearance, my very temper, altered; I became dissolute-looking and abandoned, passionate in my humours, and quick to take offence.

The downward course is ever a rapid one, and vices are eminently suggestive of each other. It took a few weeks to make me a spendthrift and a debauchee; a few more and I became a duellist and a brawler. I ceased to hold intercourse with all who had once held me in esteem, and formed friends among the dissolute and the depraved. Amidst men of this stamp the sentence of a Provost Marshal, or the duration of the Salle de Police, are reckoned distinctions: and he who has oftenest insulted his superiors and outraged discipline is deemed the most worthy of respect. I had won no laurels of this kind, and resolved not to be behind my comrades in such claims. My only thought was how to obtain some peculiar notoriety by my resistance to authority.

I had now the rank of sergeant—a grade which permitted me to frequent the café resorted to by the officers; but as this was a privilege no sous-officer availed himself of, I of course did not presume to take. It now, however, occurred to me that this was precisely the kind of infraction the consequences of which might entail the gravest events, and yet be, all the while, within the limits of regimental discipline. With this idea in my head I swaggered, one evening, into the “Lion Gaune,” at that time the favourite military café of Strasburg. The look of astonishment at my entrance was very soon converted into a most unmistakable expression of angry indignation; and when, calling for the waiter, I seated myself at a table my intrusion was discussed in terms quite loud enough for me to hear.

It was well known that the Emperor distinguished the Class I belonged to, by the most signal marks of favour—the sergeant and the corporal might have dared to address him when the field-marshal could not have uttered a word. It was part of his military policy to unbend to those whose position excluded them from even the very shadow of a rivalry, and be coldly distant to all whose station approached an equality. This consideration restrained the feelings of those who now beheld me, and who well knew, in any altercation, into which scale would be thrown the weight of the imperial influence.

To desert the side of the room where I sat, and leave me in a marked isolation, was their first move; but, seeing that I rather assumed this as a token of victory, they resorted to another tactic—they occupied all the tables, save one at the very door, and thus virtually placed me in a position of obloquy and humiliation. For a night or two I held my ground without flinching; but I felt that I could not continue a merely defensive warfare, and determined, at any hazard, to finish the struggle. Instead, therefore, of resuming the humble place they had assigned me, I carried my coffee with me, and set the cup on a table at which a lieutenant-colonel was seated, reading his newspaper by the fire. He started up as he saw me, and called out, “What means this insolence? Is this a place for you?”

“The general instructions of the army declare that a sous-officer has the entrée to all public cafés and restaurants frequented by regimental officers, although not to such as are maintained by them as clubs and mess-rooms. I am, therefore, only within the limits of a right, Monsieur Colonel,” said I, offering a military salute as I spoke.

"Leave the room, sir, and report yourself to your captain," said he, boiling over with rage.

I arose, and prepared to obey his command.

"If that fellow be not reduced to the ranks on to-morrow's parade, I'll leave the service," said he to an officer at his side.

"If I have your permission to throw him out of the window, Monsieur Colonel, I'll promise to quit the army if I don't do it," said a young lieutenant of cuirassiers. He was seated at a table near me, and with his legs in such a position as to fill up the space I had to pass out by.

Without any apology for stepping across him, I moved forward, and slightly—I will not say unintentionally—struck his foot with my own. He sprang up with a loud oath, and knocked my shako off my head. I turned quickly and struck him to the ground with my clenched hand. A dozen swords were drawn in an instant. Had it not been for the most intrepid interference, I should have been cut to pieces on the spot. As it was, I received five or six severe sabre wounds, and one entirely laid my cheek open from the eye to the mouth.

I was soon covered with blood from head to foot; but I stood calmly, until faintness came on, without stirring; then I staggered back, and sat down upon a chair. A surgeon bandaged my wrist, which had been cut across, and my face; and a carriage being sent for, I was at once conveyed to hospital. The loss of blood, perhaps, saved me from fever. At all events, I was calm and self-possessed; and, strangest of all, the excitement which for months back had taken possession of me, was gone, and I was once again myself—in patience, and quiet submission calmly awaiting the sentence which I well knew must be my death. We frequently hear that great reverses of fortune elicit and develop resources of character which, under what are called happier circumstances, had remained dormant and unknown. I am strongly disposed to attribute much of this result to purely physical changes, and that our days of prosperity are seasons of inordinate excitement, with all the bodily ills that accompany such a state. If it be so hard for the rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, is it not that his whole nature has been depraved and perverted by the consummate selfishness that comes of power? What hardeners of the heart are days of pleasure and nights of excess! And how look for the sympathy that consoles and comforts, from him whose greatest sufferings are the jarring contrarieties of his own nature?

I have said I was again myself, but with this addition, that a deep and sincere sorrow was over me for my late life, and an honest repentance for the past. I was eleven weeks in hospital; two severe relapses had prolonged my malady; and it was nigh three months after the occurrence I have detailed, that I was pronounced fit to be sent forward for trial by court martial.

There were a considerable number awaiting their trial at the same time. Men had been drafted to Strasburg from various places, and a commission sat *en permanence*, to dispose of them. There was little formality, and even less time wasted in these proceedings. The prisoner defended himself, if he were able—if not, the reading of the charge, and some slight additions of testimony, completed the investigation; the sentence being, for form sake, reserved for a later period. Occasionally it would happen that some member of the court would interpose a few favourable words, or endeavour to throw a pretext over the alleged crime; but these cases were rare, and usually nothing was heard but the charge of the accuser.

Having determined to make no defence, my whole effort was to accustom my mind to the circumstances of my fate, and so steel my heart to bear up manfully to the last. My offence was one never pardoned. This I well knew, and it only remained for me to meet the penalty like a brave man. Few, indeed, could quit the world with less ties to break—few could leave it with less to regret; and yet, such is the instinctive love of life, and so powerful are the impulses to struggle against fate, that as the time of my trial drew nigh, I would have dared any danger with the hope of escape, and accepted any commutation of a sentence short of death. I believe that this is a stage of agony to which all are exposed, and that every criminal sentenced to the scaffold must pass through this terrible period. In my case it was prolonged, my name being one of the very last for trial, and already five weeks had gone over before I was called. Even then a postponement took place, for the Emperor had arrived on his way to Germany, and a great review of the garrison superseded all other duties.

Never had all the pomp and circumstance of war seemed so grand and so splendid to my eyes, as when, through the grating of my prison-cell, I strained my glances after the dense columns and the clanking squadrons, as they passed. The gorgeous group of staff-officers and the heavy-rolling artillery had all a significance and a meaning that they had never possessed for me before. They seemed to shadow forth great events for the

future, portentous changes in time to come, gigantic convulsions in the condition of the world, kingdoms rocking, and thrones overturned. The shock of battle was, too, present to my eyes—the din, the crash, and the uproar of conflict, with all its terrors and all its chivalry. What a glorious thing must life be to those about to enter on such a career! How high must beat the hearts of all who joined in this enthusiasm!

That day was to me like whole years of existence, filled with passages of intensest excitement and moments of the very saddest depression. My brain, hitherto calm and collected, struggled in vain against a whole torrent of thoughts, without coherence or relation, and at length my faculties began to wander. I forgot where I was, and the fate that impended over me. I spoke of all that had happened to me long before; of my infancy, my boyhood, my adventures as a man, and those with whom I lived in intimacy. The turnkey, an invalided sergeant of artillery, and a kind-hearted fellow, tried to recall me to myself, by soothing and affectionate words. He even affected an interest in what I said, to try and gain some clue to my wanderings, and caught eagerly at anything that promised a hope of obtaining an influence over me. He fetched the surgeon of the gaol to my cell at last, and he pronounced my case the incipient stage of a brain fever. I heard the opinion as he whispered it, and understood its import thoroughly. I was in that state where reason flashes at moments across the mind, but all powers of collected thoughts are lost. Amongst the names that I uttered in my ravings one alone attracted their attention. It was that of Ysaffich, the Pole, of whom I spoke frequently.

“Do you know the Colonel Ysaffich?” said the doctor to me.

“Yes,” said I, slowly; “he is a Russian spy.”

“That answer scarcely denotes madness,” whispered the doctor to the turnkey, with a smile, as he turned away from the bed.

“Should you like to see him?” said he, in a kind tone.

“Of all things,” replied I, eagerly, “tell him to come to me.”

I conclude that this question was asked simply to amuse my mind, and turn it from other painful thoughts, for he shortly after retired, without further allusion to it; but from that hour my mind was riveted on the one idea; and to everybody that approached my sick bed, my first demand was, “Where was Count Ysaffich, and when was he coming to see me?”

I had been again conveyed back to the military hospital, in which I was lying when the Emperor came to make his customary visit. The prisoners’ ward was, however, one exempted

from the honour he bestowed on the rest ; and one could only hear the distant sounds of the procession as it passed from room to room.

I was lying, with my eyes half closed, lethargic and dull, when I heard a voice say,—

“Yes, Colonel, he has spoken of you constantly, and asks every day when you mean to come and see him.”

“He never served in the Legion, notwithstanding,” replied another voice, “nor do I remember ever to have seen him before.”

The tones of the speaker recalled me suddenly to myself. I looked up, and beheld Count Ysaffich before me. Though dressed in the lancer uniform of the Garde, his features were too marked to be forgotten, and I accosted him at once,—

“Have you forgotten your old colleague, Paul Gervois?” said I, trying to appear calm and at ease.

“What!—is this—can you be my old friend Gervois?” cried he, laying a hand on my shoulder, and staring hard at my face. But I could not utter a word ; shame and sorrow overcame me, and I covered my face with both my hands.

Ysaffich was not permitted to speak more with me at the time ; but he returned soon, and passed hours with me every day to the end of my illness. He was intimate with the officer I had insulted ; and, by immense efforts, and the kind assistance of the medical authorities, succeeded in establishing a plea of temporary insanity for my offence, by which I escaped punishment, and was dismissed the service. This was a period of much suffering to me, mentally as well as bodily. I felt all the humiliation at which my life had been purchased, and more than once did the price appear far too great a one.



CHAPTER XLVI.

YSAFFICH.

I WAS now domesticated with Ysaffich, who occupied good quarters in Kehl, where the Polish Legion, as it was called, was garrisoned. He treated me with every kindness, and presented me to his comrades as an old and valued friend. I was not sorry to find myself at once amongst total strangers—men of a country quite new to me, and who themselves had seen reverses and misfortunes enough to make them lenient in their judgments of narrow fortune. They were, besides, a fine soldier-like race of fellows—good horsemen, excellent swordsmen, reckless as all men who have neither home nor country, and ready for any deed of daring or danger. There was a jealousy between them and the French officers, which prevented any social intercourse; and duels were by no means a rare event whenever they had occasion to meet. The Imperial laws were tremendously severe on this offence; and he who killed his adversary in a duel, was certain of death by the law. To evade the consequences of such a penalty, the most extravagant devices were practised, and many a deadly quarrel was decided in a pretended fencing match. It was in one of these mock trials of skill that Colonel le Brun was killed, an officer of great merit, and younger brother of the general of that name.

From that time the attention of the military authorities was more closely drawn to this practice; and such meetings were for the future always attended by several gendarmes, who narrowly scrutinized every detail of the proceeding. With such perfect good faith, however, was the secret maintained on both sides, that discovery was almost impossible. Not only was every etiquette of familiar intimacy strictly observed on these occasions, but a most honourable secrecy by all concerned.

I was soon to be a witness of one of these adventures. Ysaffich, whose duties required him to repair frequently to Strasburg, had been grossly, and, as I heard, wantonly out-

raged by a young captain of the imperial staff, who, seeing his name on a slip of paper on a military table d'hôte, added with his pencil the words *Espion Russe* after it. Of course a meeting was at once arranged, and it was planned that Challengrouze, the captain, and four of his brother officers were to come over and visit the fortifications at Kehl, breakfasting with us, and being our guests for the morning. Two only of Ysaffich's friends were entrusted with the project, and invited to meet the others.

I cannot say that I ever felt what could be called a sincere friendship for Ysaffich. He was one of those men who neither inspire such attachments, nor need them in return. It was not that he was cold and distant, repelling familiarity, and refusing sympathy. It was exactly the opposite. He revealed everything, even to the minutest particle of his history, and told you of himself every emotion and every feeling that moved him. He was frankness and candour itself; but it was a frankness that spoke of utter indifference—perfect recklessness as to your judgment on him, and what opinion you should form of his character. He told you of actions that reflected on his good faith, and uttered sentiments that arraigned his sense of honour, not only without hesitation, but with an air of assumed superiority to all the prejudices that sway other men in similar cases. Even in the instance of the approaching duel, he avowed that Challengrouze's offence was in the manner, and not the matter, of the insult. His whole theory of life was, that every one was false, not only to others, but to himself; that no man really felt love, patriotism, or religion in his heart, but that he assumed one or more of these affections as a cloak to whatever vices were most easily practised under such a disguise. It was a code to stifle every generous feeling of the heart, and make a man's nature barren as a desert.

He never fully disclosed these sentiments until the evening before the duel. It was then, in the midst of preparations for the morrow, that he revealed to me all that he felt and thought. There was, throughout these confessions, a tone of indifference that shocked me, more, perhaps, than actual levity; and I own I regarded him with a sense of terror, and as one whose very contact was perilous.

"I have married since I saw you last," said he to me, after a long interval of silence. "My wife was a former acquaintance of yours. You must go and see her, if this event turn out ill, and 'break the tidings,' as they call it; not that the task will demand any extraordinary display of skill at your hands," said

he, laughing. "Madame the Countess will bear her loss with becoming dignity; and as I have nothing to bequeath, the disposition of my property cannot offend her. If, however," added he, with more energy of manner, "if, however, the Captain should fall, we must take measures to fly. I'll not risk a *cour militaire* in such a cause, so that we must escape."

All his arrangements had been already made for this casualty; and I found that relays of horses had been provided to within a short distance of Mainheim, where we were to cross the Rhine, and trust to chances to guide us through the Luxembourg territory down to Namur, at a little village in the neighbourhood of which town his wife was then living. My part in the plan was to repair by daybreak to Erlauch, a small village on the Rhine, three leagues from Kehl, and await his arrival, or such tidings as might recall me to Kehl.

"If I be not with you by seven o'clock at the latest," said he, "it is because Challendrouze has *visé*d my passports for another route."

These were his last words to me ere I started, with, it is not too much to say, a far heavier heart than he had who uttered them.

It was drawing towards evening, and I was standing watching the lazy drift of a timber-raft as it floated down the river, when I heard the clattering of a horse's hoofs approaching at a full gallop. I turned, and saw Ysaffich, who was coming at full speed, waving his handkerchief by way of signal.

I hurried back to the inn to order out the horses at once, and, ere many minutes, we were in the saddle, side by side, not a word having passed between us till, as we passed out into the open country, Ysaffich, said,—

"We must ride for it, Gervois."

"It's all over then?" said I.

"Yes, all over," said he, while pressing his horse to speed, he dashed on in front of me; nor was I sorry that even so much of space separated us at that moment.

Through that long, bright, starry night we rode at the top speed of our horses, and, as day was breaking, entered Rostadt, where we ate a hasty breakfast, and again set out. Ysaffich reported himself at each military station as the bearer of despatches, till, on the second morning, we arrived at Hellsheim, on the Bergstrasse, where we left our horses, and proceeded on foot to the Rhine, by a little pathway across the fields. We crossed the river, and, hiring a waggon, drove on to Erz, a hamlet on the Moselle, at which place we found horses

again ready for us. I was terribly fatigued by this time, but Ysaffich seemed fresh as when we started. Seeing, however, my exhaustion, he proposed to halt for a couple of hours—a favour I gladly accepted. The interval over, we remounted, and so on to Namur, where we arrived on the sixth day, having scarcely interchanged as many words with each other from the moment of our setting out.



CHAPTER XLVII.

TOWARDS HOME.

YSAFFICH'S retreat was a small cottage, about two miles from Dinant, and on the verge of the Ardennes forest. He had purchased it from a retired "Garde Chasse" some years before, "seeing," as he said, "it was exactly the kind of place a man may lie concealed in whenever the time comes, as it invariably does come, that one wants to escape from recognition."

I have already said that he was not very communicative as we went along, but as we drew nigh to Dinant he told me, in a few words, the chief events of his career since we had parted.

"I have made innumerable mistakes in life, Gervois, but my last was the worst of all. I married! Yes, I persuaded your old acquaintance, Madame von Geysiger, to accept me at last. She yielded, placed her millions and tens of millions at my disposal, and three months after we were beggared. Davoust found, or said he found, that I was a Russian spy; swore that I was carrying on a secret correspondence with Sweden; confiscated every sous we had in the world, and threw me into gaol at Lubeck, from which I managed to escape, and made my way to Paris. There I preferred my claim against the marshal; at first before the *cour militaire*, then to the minister, then to the Emperor. They all agreed that Davoust was grossly unjust; that my case was one of the greatest hardship, and so on; that the money was gone, and there was no help for it. In fact, I was pitied by some, and laughed at by others; and out of

sheer disgust at the deplorable spectacle I presented, a daily supplicant at some official antechamber, I agreed to take my indemnity in the only way that offered, a commission in the newly-raised Polish legion, where I served for two years, and quitted three days ago in the manner you witnessed."

His narrative scarcely occupied more words than I have given it. He told me the story as we led our horses up a narrow bridle-path that ascended from the river's side, to a little elevated terrace where a cottage stood.

"There," said he, pointing with his whip, "there is my *pied à terre*, all that I possess in the world, after twenty years of more persevering pursuit of wealth than any man in Europe. Ay, Gervois, for us, who are not born to the high places in this world, there is but one road open to power, and that is money! It matters not whether the influence be exerted by a life of splendour, or an existence of miserable privation—money is power, and the only power that every faction acknowledges, and bows down to. He who lends is the master, and he who borrows is the slave. That is a doctrine that monarchs and democrats all agree in. The best proof I can afford you that my opinion is sincere, lies in the simple fact, that he who utters the sentiment lives here;" and with these words he tapped with the head of his riding-whip at the door of the cottage.

Although only an hour after the sun set, the windows were barred and shuttered for the night, and all within seemingly had retired to rest. The Count repeated his summons louder; and at last the sounds of heavy *sabots* were heard approaching the door. It was opened at length, and a sturdy-looking peasant woman, in the long-eared cap and woollen jacket of the country, asked what we wanted.

"Don't you know me, Lisette?" said the Count; "how is madame?"

The brown cheeks of the woman became suddenly pale, and she had to grasp the door for support before she could speak.

"*Eh, heu!*" said he, accosting her familiarly in the patois of the land, "what is it—what has happened here?"

The woman looked at me and then at him, as though to say that she desired to speak to him apart. I understood the glance, and fell back to a little distance, occupying myself with my horse, ungirthing the saddle, and so on. The few minutes thus employed were passed in close whispering by the others, at the end of which the Count said aloud,—

"Well, who is to look after the beasts? Is Louis not here?"

"He was at Dinant, but would return presently."

"Be it so," said the Count, "we'll stable them ourselves. Meanwhile, Lisette, prepare something for our supper. Lisette has not her equal for an omelette," said he to me, "and when the Meuse yields us fresh trout, you'll acknowledge that her skill will not discredit them."

The woman's face, as he spoke these words in an easy, jocular tone, was actually ghastly. It seemed as if she were contending against some sickening sensation that was overpowering her, for her eyes lost all expression, and her ruddy lips grew livid. The only answer was a brief nod of her head as she turned away, and re-entered the house. I watched the Count narrowly as we busied ourselves about our horses, but nothing could be possibly more calm, and to all seeming unconcerned, than his bearing and manner. The few words he spoke were in reference to objects around us, and uttered with careless ease.

When we entered the cottage we found Lisette had already spread a cloth, and was making preparations for our supper; and Ysaffich, with the readiness of an old campaigner, proceeded to aid her in these details. At last she left the room, and looking after her for a second or two in silence, he said, compassionately,—

"Poor creature! she takes this to heart far more heavily than I could have thought;" and then seeing that the words were not quite intelligible to me, he added, "Yes, *mon cher* Gregoire, I am a bachelor once more; Madame the Countess has left me! Weary of a life of poverty to which she had been so long unaccustomed, she has returned to the world again—to the stage, perhaps—who knows?" added he, with a careless indifference, and as though dismissing the theme from his thoughts for ever.

I had never liked him, but at no time of our intercourse did he appear so thoroughly odious to me as when he uttered these words.

There is some strange fatality in the way our characters are frequently impressed by circumstances and intimacies which seem the veriest accidents. We linger in some baneful climate, till it has made its fatal inroad on our health; and so we as often dally amidst associations fully as dangerous and deadly. In this way did I continue to live on with Ysaffich, daily resolving to leave him, and yet, by some curious chain of events, bound up inseparably with his fortunes. At one moment his poverty was the tie between us. We supported ourselves by the *Chasse*, a poor and most precarious livelihood, and one

which, we well knew, would fail us when the spring came. At other moments, he would gain an influence over me by the exercise of that sanguine, hopeful spirit, which seemed never to desert him. He saw, or affected to see, that the great drama of revolution which closed the century in France must yet be played out over the length and breadth of Europe, and that in this great piece the chief actors would be those who had all to gain and nothing to lose by the convulsion. "We shall have good parts in the play, Gregoire," would he repeat to me, time after time, till he thoroughly filled my mind with ambitions that rose far above the region of all probability, and, worse still, that utterly silenced every whisper of conscience within me.

Had he attempted to corrupt me by the vulgar ideas of wealth—by the splendour of a life of luxurious ease and enjoyment, with all the appliances of riches—it is more than likely he would have failed. He, however, assailed me by my weak side; the delight I always experienced in acts of protection and benevolence—the pleasure I felt in being regarded by others as their good genius—this was a flattery that never ceased to sway me! The selfishness of such a part lay so hidden from view; there was a plausibility in one's conviction of being good and amiable, that the enjoyment became really of a higher order than usually waits on mere egotism. I had been long estranged from the world, so far as the ties of affection and friendship existed. For me there was neither home nor family, and yet I yearned for what would bind me to the cause of my fellow-men. All my thoughts were now centred on this object, and innumerable were the projects by which I amused my imagination about it. Ysaïch, perhaps, detected this clue to my confidence. At all events, he made it the pivot of all reasonings with me. To be powerless with good intentions—to have the "will" to work for good, and yet want the "way"—was, he would say, about the severest torture poor humanity could be called on to endure. When he had so far imbued my mind with these notions, that he found me not only penetrated with his own views, but actually employing his own reasonings, his very expressions, to maintain them, he then advanced a step further—and this was to demonstrate that to every success in life there was a compromise attached, as inseparable as were shadow and substance.

"Was there not," he would say, "a compensation attached to every great act of statesmanship—to every brilliant success in war—in fact, to every grand achievement, wherever and however accomplished? It is simply a question of weighing the evil against the good, whatever we do in life, and he is

the best of us who has the largest balance in the scales of virtue."

When a subtle theory takes possession of the mind, it is curious to mark with what ingenuity examples will suggest themselves to sustain and support it. Ysaïch possessed a ready memory, and never failed to supply me with illustrations of his system. There was scarcely a good or great name of ancient or modern times that he could not bring within this category; and many an hour have we passed in disputing the claims of this one or that to be accounted as the benefactor or the enemy of mankind. If I recall these memories now, it is simply to show the steps by which a mind far more subtle and acute than my own, succeeded in establishing its influence over me.

I have said that we were very poor; our resources were derived from the scantiest of all supplies; and even these, as the spring drew nigh, showed signs of failure. If, I, at times, regarded our future with gloomy anticipations, my companion never did so. On the contrary, his hopeful spirit seemed to rise under the pressure of each new sufferance, and he constantly cheered me by saying, "The tide must ebb soon." It is true, this confidence did not prevent him suggesting various means by which we might eke out a livelihood.

"It is the same old story over again," said he to me one day, as we sat at our meal of dry bread and water. "Archimedes could have moved the world had he had a support whereon to station his lever, and so with me; I could at this very moment rise to wealth and power, could I but find a similar appliance. There is a million to be made on the Bourse of Amsterdam any morning, if one only could pay for a courier who should arrive at speed from the Danube with the news of a defeat of the French army. A lighted tar-barrel in the midst of the English fleet at Spithead, wouldn't cost a deal of money, and yet might do great things towards changing the fortunes of mankind. And even here," added he, taking a letter from his pocket, "even here are the means of wealth and fortune to both of us, if I could rely on you for the requisite energy and courage to play your part."

"I have at least had courage to share your fortunes," said I, half angrily; "and even that much might exempt me from the reproach of cowardice."

Not heeding my taunt in the slightest, he resumed his speech, with slow and deliberate words—

"I found this paper last night by a mere accident, when looking over some old letters; but, unfortunately, it is not accom-

panied by any other document which could aid us, though I have searched closely to discover such."

So often had it been my fate to hear him hold forth on similar themes—on incidents which lacked but little, the veriest trifle, to lead to fortune—that I confess I paid slight attention to his words, and scarcely heard him as he went on describing how he had chanced upon his present discovery, when he suddenly startled me by saying—

"And yet, even now, if you were of the stuff to dare it, there is wherewithal in that letter to make you a great man, and both of us rich ones."

Seeing that he had at least secured my attention, he went on:—

"You remember the first time we ever met, Gervois, and the evening of our arrival at Hamburgh. Well, on that same night there occurred to me the thought of making your fortune and my own; and when I shall have explained to you how, you will probably look less incredulous than you now do. You may remember that the first husband of Madame von Geysiger was a rich merchant of Hamburgh. Well, there chanced to be in his employment a certain English clerk, who conducted all his correspondence with foreign countries—a man of great business knowledge and strict probity, and by whose means Von Geysiger once escaped the risk of total bankruptcy. Full of gratitude for his services, Von Geysiger wished to give him a partnership in the house; but, however flattering the prospect for one of humble means, he positively rejected the offer; and when pressed for his reasons for so doing, at last owned that he could not consistently pledge himself to adhere to the fortunes of his benefactor, since he had in heart devoted his life to another object—one for which he then only laboured to obtain means to prosecute. I do not believe that the secret to which he alluded was divulged at the time, nor even for a long while after; but at length it came out, that this poor fellow had no other aim in life than to find out the heir to a certain great estate in England, which had lapsed from its rightful owner, and to obtain the document which should establish his claim. To this end, he had associated himself with some relative of the missing youth—a lady of rank, I have heard tell, and of considerable personal attractions—who had braved poverty and hardship of the severest kind, in the pursuit of this one object. I do not know where they had not travelled, nor what amount of toil they had not bestowed on this search. Occasionally allured by some apparent clue, they had visited the most remote parts of the

Continent; and at last, acting on some information derived from one of their many agents, they left Europe for America. That the pursuit is still unsuccessful, an advertisement that I saw, a few days back, in a Dutch newspaper, assures me. A large reward is there offered for any one who can give certain information as to the surviving relatives of a French lady—the name I forget, but which, at the time, I remembered as one of those connected with this story. And now, to apply the case to yourself, there were so many circumstances of similitude in the fortunes of this youth and your own life, that it occurred to me, and not alone to me, but to another, to make you his representative."

For a moment I scarcely knew whether to be indignant or amused at this shameless avowal; but the absurdity overcame my anger, and I laughed long and heartily at it.

"Laugh if you will, my dear Gervois," said he; "but you are not the first, nor will you be the last, kite who has roosted in the eagle's nest. Take my word for it, with all the cares and provisions of law, it is seldom enough that the rightful heir sits in the hall of his fathers; and, in the present case, we know that the occupant is a mere pretender; so that your claim, or mine, if you like it, is fully as good as his to be there."

"You have certainly excited my curiosity on one point," said I, "and it is to know where the resemblance lies between this gentleman's case and my own; pray tell me that!"

"Easily enough," said he, "and from the very papers in my hand—a mixed parentage, French and English—a father of one country, a mother of another—a life of scrapes and vicissitudes—but, better than all, a position so isolated that none can claim you. There, my dear Gervois, there is the best feature in the whole case; and if I could only inspire your heart with a dash of the ambitious daring that fills my own, it is not on a straw bed nor a starvation diet we should speculate over the future before us. Just fancy, if you can, the glorious life of ease and enjoyment that would reward us if we succeed; and as to failure, conjure up, if you are able, anything worse than this;" and as he spoke he made a gesture with his hand towards the wretched furniture of our humble chamber.

"You seem to exclude from your calculation all question of right and wrong," said I, "of justice or injustice."

"I have already told you that he who now enjoys this estate is not its real owner. It is, to all purposes, a disputed territory, where the strongest may plant his flag—yours to-day, another may advance to the conquest to-morrow. I only say,

that to fellows like us, who, for ought I see, may have to take the highroad for a livelihood, this chance is not to be despised."

"Then why not yourself attempt it?"

"For two sufficient reasons. I am a Pole, and my nationality can be proved; and secondly, I am full ten years too old—this youth was born about the year 1782."

"The very year of my own birth!" said I.

"By Jove, Gervois! everything would seem to aid us. There is but one deficiency," added he, after a pause, and a look towards me of such significance, that I could not misunderstand it.

"I know what you mean," said I; "the want lies in me—in my lack of energy and courage. I might, perhaps, give another name to it," added I, after waiting in vain for some reply on his part, "and speak of reluctance to become a swindler."

A long silence now ensued between us. Each seemed to feel that another word might act like a spark in a magazine, and produce a fearful explosion; and so we sat, scarcely daring to look each other in the face. As we remained thus, my eyes fell upon the paper in his hand, and read the following words:—"Son of Walter Carew, of Castle Carew, and Josephine de Courtois, his wife." I snatched the document from his fingers, and read on. "The proof of this marriage wanting, but supposed to have been solemnized at or about the year 1780 or '81. No trace of Mademoiselle de Courtois' family obtainable, save her relationship to Count de Gabriac, who died in England three years ago. The youth Jasper Carew served in the Bureau of the Minister of War at Paris in—'95, and was afterwards seen in the provinces, supposed to be employed by the Legitimist party as an agent; traced thence to England, and believed to have gone to America, or the West Indies." Then followed some vague speculations as to where and how this youth was possibly employed, and some equally delusive guesses as to the signs by which he might be recognized.

"Does that interest you, Gervois?" said Ysaffich. "This is the best part of the narrative, to my thinking; read that, and say if your heart does not bound at the very notion of such a prize."

The paper which he now handed to me was closely and carefully written, and headed, "Descriptive sketch of the lands and estate of the late Walter Carew, Esq., known as the demesne of Castle Carew, in the county of Wicklow, in Ireland."

"Two thousand seven hundred acres of a park, and a princely mansion!" exclaimed the Count. "An estate of at least

twelve thousand pounds a year! Gervois, my boy, why not attempt it?"

"You talk wildly, Ysaffich," said I, restraining by a great effort the emotions that were almost suffocating me. "Bethink you who I am—poor, friendless, and unprotected. Take it, even, that I had the most indisputable right to this fortune; assume, if you will, that I am the very person here alluded to, where is there a single document to prove my claim?—should I not be scouted at the bare mention of such pretensions?"

"That would all depend on the way the affair was managed," said he. "If these solicitors whose names and addresses I have here, were themselves convinced, or even disposed to credit the truth of the tale we should tell them, they would embark in the suit with all their influence and all their wealth. Once engaged in it, self interest would secure their zealous co-operation. As to documents, proofs, and all that, these things are a material that lawyers know how to supply, or if need be, explain the absence of. Of this missing youth's story I already know enough for our purpose; and when you have narrated for me your own life, we will arrange the circumstances together, and weave of the two one consistent and plausible tale. Take my word for it, that if we can once succeed in interesting counsel in your behalf, the very novelty of the incident will enlist public sympathy. Jurors are, after all, but representatives of that same passing opinion, and will be well disposed to befriend our cause. I speak as if the matter must come to a head; but it need not go so far. When our plans are laid and all our advances duly prepared, we may condescend to treat with the enemy. Ay, Gervois, we may be inclined to accept a compromise of our claim. These things are done every day. The men who seem to sit in all the security of undisturbed possession, are buying off demands here, paying hush-money to this man, and bribery to that."

"But if the real claimant should appear on the stage——"

"I have reason to believe he is dead these many years," said he, interrupting; "but were it otherwise, these friends of his are of such a scrupulous temperament, they would not adventure on the suit without such a mass of proof as no concurrence of accidents could possibly accumulate. They have not the nerve to accomplish an undertaking of this kind, where much must be hazarded, and many things done at risk."

"Which means, in plain words, done fraudulently," said I, solemnly.

"Let us not fall out about words," said he, smiling. "When

a state issues a paper currency, it waits for the day of prosperity to recall the issue, and redeem the debt ; and if we live and do well, what shall prevent us making an equally good use of our fortune. But you may leave all this to me ; I will undertake every document, from the certificate of your father's marriage to your own baptism ; I will legalise you, and legitimatise you ; you have only to be passive."

"I half suspect, Count," said I, laughing, "that if my claim to this estate were a real one, I should not be so sure of your aid and assistance."

"And you are right there, Gervois. It is in the very daring and danger of this pursuit I feel the pleasure. The game on which I risk nothing has no excitement for me ; but here the stake is a heavy one."

"And how would you proceed ?" asked I, not heeding this remark.

"By opening a correspondence with Bickering and Ragge, the lawyers. They have long been in search of the heir, and would be delighted to hear there were any tidings of his existence. My name is already known to them, and I could address them with confidence. They would, of course, require to see you, and either come over here or send for you. In either case you would be preceded by your story ; the family parts should be supplied by me ; the other details you should fill in at will. All this, however, should be concerted together. The first point is your consent—your hearty consent ; and even that I would not accept, unless ratified by a solemn oath, to persist to the last, and never falter nor give in to the end, whatever it be !"

I at first hesitated, but at last consented to give the required pledge : and though for a while it occurred to me that a frank avowal of my real claim to be the person designated might best suit the object I had in view, I suddenly bethought me that if Ysaffich once believed that he himself was not the prime mover in the scheme, and that I was other than a mere puppet in his hand, he was far more likely to mar than to make our fortune. Intrigue and trick were the very essence of the man's nature ; and it was enough that the truthful entered into anything to destroy its whole value or interest in his eyes. That this plot had long been lying in his mind, I had but to remember the night in the garden at Hamburg to be convinced of, and since that time he had never ceased to ruminate upon it. Indeed, he now told me that it constantly occurred to him to

fancy that this piece of success was to be a crowning recompense for a long life of reverses and failures.

How gladly did my thoughts turn from him and all his crafty counsels, to think of that true friend, poor Raper, and my dear, dear mother, as I used to call her, who had, in the midst of their own hard trials, devoted their best energies to my cause. It is not necessary to say that Raper was the faithful clerk, and Polly the unknown lady, who had given the impulse to this search. The papers of which Ysaffich showed me several, were all in the handwriting of one or other of them: a few of my father's own letters were also in one packet, and though referring to matters far remote from this object, had an indescribable interest for me.

"Seven years ago," said the Count, "this estate was in the possession of a certain Mr. Curtis, who claimed to be the next of kin of the late owner, and who, I believe, was so, in the failure of this youth's legitimacy. This is now our great fact, since we have already found the individual. Eh, Gervois?" said he, laughing. "Our man is here, and from this hour forth your name is—let me see what it is—ay, here we have it—Jasper Carew, son of Walter Carew and Josephine de Courtois his wife.

"Jasper Carew am I from this day, then, and never to be called by any other name," said I.

"Ay, but you must have your lesson perfect," said he; "you must not forget the name of your parents."

"Never fear," said I; "Walter Carew and Josephine de Courtois are easily remembered."

"All correct," said he, well pleased at my accuracy. "Now, as to family history, this paper will tell you enough. It is drawn out by Mr. Raper, and is minutely exact. There is not a strong point of the case omitted, nor a weak one forgotten. Read it over carefully—mark the points in which you trace resemblance to your own life; study well where any divergence or difficulty may occur; and lastly, draw up a brief memoir in the character of Jasper Carew, with all your recollections of childhood; for remember, that up to the age of twelve or thirteen, if not later, you were domesticated with this Countess de Gabriac, and educated by Raper. After that you are free to follow out what fancy, or reality, if you like it better, may suggest. When you have drawn up everything, with all the consistency and plausibility you can, avoid none of the real difficulties, but rather show yourself fully aware of them, and also to all their importance. Let the task of having persuaded you to address Messrs. Bickering and Ragge be left to me; I

have already held correspondence with them, and on this very subject. I give you three days to do this; meanwhile I start at once for Brussels, where I can consult a lawyer, an old friend of mine, as to our first steps in the campaign."

The man who stoops once to a minute dissection of his life, must perforce steel his heart against many a sense of shame, since even in the story of the good and the upright are passages of dark omen—moments when the bad has triumphed, and seasons when the true has been postponed by the false. It is not now that, having revealed so much as I have done of my secret history, I dare make any pretensions to superior honesty, or affect to be one of the "unblemished few." Still I have a craving desire not to be judged over-harshly—a painful feeling of anxiety that no evil construction should be put upon those actions of my life other than what they absolutely merit. My "over-reachings" have been many—my "shortcomings" still more; but with all their weight and gravity before me, I still entreat a merciful judgment, and hope that if the sentence be "guilty," there will be at least the alleviation of "attenuating circumstances."

I am now an old man; the world has no more any bribe to my ambition than have I within me the energy to attempt it. The friendships that warmed up the late autumn of my life are departed; they lie in the churchyard, and none have ever replaced them. In these confessions, therefore, humiliating as they often would seem, there are none to suffer pain. I make them at the cost of my own feelings alone, and in some sense I do so as an act of atonement and reparation to a world, that with some hard lessons, has still treated me with kindness, and to whom, with the tremulous fingers of old age, I write myself most grateful.

If they who read this story suppose that I should not have hesitated to propose myself a claimant for an estate to which I had no right, I have no better answer to give them than a mere denial, and even that uttered in all humility, since it comes from one whose good name has been impeached, and whose good faith may be questioned. Still do I repeat it, this was an act I could not have done. There is a kind of half-way rectitude in the world, which never scruples at the means of any success, so long as it injures no other, but which recoils from the thought of any advantage obtained at another's cost and detriment. Such, I suspect, to have been mine. At least I can declare with truth that I am not conscious of an incident in my life which will bear the opposite construction.

But to what end should I endeavour to defend my motives, since my actions are already before the world, and each will read them by the light his own conscience lends? Let me rather hasten to complete a task, which, since it has involved an apology, has become almost painful to pursue.

So successfully had Ysaffich employed his time at Brussels, that a well-known notary there had already consented to aid our plans, and furnish means for our journey to England. I cannot go over with minuteness details, in which the deceptions I had to concur in still revive my shame. I could, it is true, recite the story of my birth and parentage, my early years abroad, and so on, with the conscious force of truth; but there were supplementary evidences required of me, with which I could not bring myself to comply. Ysaffich, naturally enough, could not understand the delicacy of scruples, which only took alarm by mere caprice, nor could he comprehend why he who was willing to feign a name and falsify a position, should hesitate about assuming any circumstances that might be useful to sustain it.

Of course I could not explain this mystery, and was obliged to endure all the sarcastic allusions he vented on the acuteness of my sense of honour, and the extreme susceptibility of my notions of right. It chanced, however, that this very repugnance on my part should prove more favourable for us than all his most artful devices, and indeed it shows with clearness how often the superadded efforts fraud contributes to ensure success are as frequently the very sources of its failure—just as we see in darker crimes how the over care and caution of the murderer have been the clue that has elicited the murder.

Ysaffich wished me to detail, amongst the memories of my childhood, the having heard often of the great estate and vast fortune to which I was entitled. He wanted me to supply, as it were from memory, many links of the chain of evidence that seemed deficient—vague recollections of having heard this, that, and the other; but with an obstinacy that to him appeared incomprehensible I held to my own unadorned tale, and would not add a word beyond my own conviction.

Mr. Ragge, the solicitor by whom the case was undertaken, seemed most favourably impressed by this reserve on my part, and far from being discouraged by my ignorance of certain points, appeared, on the contrary, only the more satisfied as to the genuineness of my story. Over and over have I felt in my conversations with him how impossible it would have been for me to practise any deception successfully with him. Without any semblance of cross-examination, he still contrived to bring

me again and again over the same ground, viewing the same statement from different sides, and trying to discover a discrepancy in my narrative. When at length assured, to all appearance at least, of my being the person I claimed to be, he drew up a statement of my case for counsel, and a day was named when I should be personally examined by a distinguished member of the bar. I cannot even now recall that interview without a thrill of emotion. My sense of hope, dashed as it was by a conscious feeling that I was, in some sort, practising a deception—for in all my compact with Ysaffich our attempt was purely a fraud—I entered the chamber with a faltering step and a failing heart. Far, however, from questioning and cross-questioning like the solicitor, the lawyer suffered me to tell my story, without even so much as a word of interruption. I had, I ought to remark, divested my tale of many of the incidents which really befell me. I made my life one of commonplace events and unexciting adventures, in which poverty occupied the prominent place. I as cautiously abstained from all mention of the distinguished persons with whom accident had brought me into contact, since any allusion to them would have compromised the part I was obliged to play with Ysaffich. When asked what documents or written evidence I had to adduce in support of my pretensions, and I had confessed to possessing none, the old lawyer leaned back in his chair, and, closing his eyes, seemed lost in thought.

“At the best,” said he, at length, “it is a case for a compromise. There is really so little to go upon, I can advise nothing better.”

I need not go into the discussion that ensued, further than to say, the weight of argument was on the side of those who counselled the compromise, and, however little disposed to yield, I felt myself overborne by numbers, and compelled to give in.

Weeks, even months, were now passed without any apparent progress in our suit. The party in possession of the estate treated our first advances with the most undisguised contempt, and even met our proposals with menaces of legal vengeance. Undeterred by these signs of strength, Mr. Ragge persevered in his search for evidence; sent his emissaries hither and thither, and entered upon the case with all the warm zeal of a devoted friend. It was at length thought that a visit to Ireland might possibly elicit some information on certain points, and thither we went together.

It was little more than a quarter of a century since the date

of my father's death, and yet, such had been the changes in the condition of Ireland, and so great the social revolution accomplished there, that men talked of the bygone period like some long-past history. The days of the parliaments, and the men who figured in them, were alike forgotten; and although there were many who had known my father well, all memory, not to speak of affection for him, had lapsed from their natures.

Crowther and Fagan were dead, but Joe Curtis was alive, and continued to live in Castle Carew, in a style of riotous debauchery that scandalized the whole country. In fact the mere mention of his name was sufficient to elicit the most disgraceful anecdotes of his habits. Unknown to and unrecognized by his equals, this old man had condescended to form intimacy with all that Dublin contained of the profligate and abandoned; and surrounded by men and women of this class, his days and nights were one continued orgie. Although the estate was a large one, it was rumoured that he was deeply in debt, and only obtained means for this wasteful existence by loans on ruinous conditions. In vain Mr. Ragge made inquiries for some one who might possess his confidence and have the legal direction of his affairs. He had changed from this man to that so often, that it was scarcely possible to discover in what quarter the property was managed. Without any settled plan of procedure, but half to watch the eventualities that might arise, it was determined that I should proceed to Castle Carew and present myself as the son and the heir of the last owner.

If there were circumstances attendant on this step which I by no means fancied, there was one gratification that more than atoned for them all—I should see the ancient home of my family; the halls wherein my father's noble hospitalities had been practised; the chamber which had been my dear mother's! I own that the sight of the princely domain and all its attendant wealth, contrasting with my own poverty, served to extinguish within me the last spark of hope. How could I possibly dream of success against the power of such adjuncts as these? Were my cause fortified by every document and evidence, how little would it avail against the might of vast wealth and resources! Curtis would laugh my pretensions to scorn, if not treat them with greater violence; and with such thoughts I found myself one bright morning of June slowly traversing the approach to the Castle. The sight of the dense dark woods, the swelling lawns, dotted over with grazing cattle, the distant corn-fields, waving beneath a summer wind, and the tall towers of the Castle itself far off above the trees, all filled my heart

with a strange chaos, in which hope, and fear, and proud ambition, and the very humblest terrors were all commingled. Although my plan of procedure had been carefully sketched out for me by Ragge, so confused were all my thoughts that I forgot everything. I could not even bethink me in what character and with what pretension I was to present myself, and I was actually at the very entrance of the Castle, still trying to remember the part I was to play.

There before me rose the grand and massive edifice, to erect which had been one of the chief elements of my poor father's ruin. Though far from architecturally correct in its details, the effect of the whole was singularly fine. Between two square towers of great size extended a long façade, in which, from the ornamented style of architraves and brackets, it was easy to see the chief suite of apartments lay; and in front of this the ground had been artificially terraced, and gardens formed in the Italian taste, the entire being defended by a deep fosse in front, and crossed by a drawbridge. Neglect and dilapidation had, however, disfigured all these; the terraces were broken down by the cattle, the cordage of the bridge hung in fragments in the wind, and even the stained-glass windows were smashed, and their places filled by paper or wooden substitutes. As I came nearer, these signs of ruin and devastation were still more apparent. The marble statues were fractured, and fissured by bullet marks; the pastures were cut up by horses' feet; and even fragments of furniture were strewn about, as though thrown from the windows in some paroxysm of passionate debauchery. The door of the mansion was open, and evidences of even greater decay presented themselves within. Massive cornices of carved oak hung broken and shattered from the walls; richly-cut wainscottings were split and fissured; a huge marble table of immense thickness was smashed through the centre, and the fragments still lay scattered on the floor where they had fallen. As I stood, in mournful mood, gazing on this desecration of what once had been a noble and costly estate, an ill-dressed, slatternly woman-servant chanced to cross the hall, and stopped with some astonishment to stare at me. To my inquiry, if I could see Mr. Curtis, she replied by a burst of laughter, too natural to be deemed offensive—

“By coorse you couldn't,” said she at length; “sure there's nobody stirrin', nor won't be these two hours.”

“At what time, then, might I hope to be more fortunate?”

“If I came about three or four in the afternoon, when the

gentlemen were at breakfast, I might see Mr. Archy—Archy M'Clean."

This gentleman was, as she told me, the nephew of Mr. Curtis, and his reputed heir.

Having informed her that I was a stranger in Ireland, and come from a long distance off to pay this visit, she good-naturedly suffered me to enter the house, and rest myself in a small and meanly-furnished chamber adjoining the hall. If I could but recall the sensations which passed through my mind, as I sat in that solitary room, I could give a more correct picture of my nature than by all I have narrated of my actual life. Hour after hour glided by at first, in all the stillness of midnight; but gradually a faint noise would be heard afar off, and now and again a voice would echo through the long corridors, the very accents of which seemed to bring up thoughts of savage revelry and debauch. It had been decided by my lawyers that I should present myself to Curtis, without any previous notification of my identity or my claim; that, in fact, not to prejudice my chances of success by any written application for an audience, I should contrive to see him without his having expected me; and thus derive whatever advantage might accrue from any admissions his surprise should betray him into. I had been drilled into my part by repeated lessons. I was instructed as to every word I was to utter, and every phrase I was to use; but now that the moment to employ these arts drew nigh, I had utterly forgotten them all. The one absorbing thought—that beneath the very roof under which I now stood my father and mother had lived—that these walls were their own home—that within them had been passed the short life they had shared together—overcame me so completely, that I lost all consciousness about myself and my object there.

At length the loud tones of many voices aroused me from my half stupor, and, on drawing nigh the door, I perceived a number of servants, ill-dressed and disorderly-looking, carrying hurriedly across the hall the materials for a breakfast. I addressed myself to one of these, with a request to know when and how I could see Mr. Curtis. A bold stare, and a rude burst of laughter, was, however, the only reply he made me. I tried another, who did not even vouchsafe to hear more than half my question, when he passed on.

"Is it possible," said I, indignantly, "that none of you will take a message for your master?"

"Begad, we have so many masters," said one, jocosely, "it's

hard to say where we ought to deliver it ;” and the speech was received with a roar of approving laughter.

“It is Mr. Curtis I desire to see,” said I.

“It’s four hours too early, then,” said the same speaker. “Old Joe won’t be stirring till nigh eight o’clock. If Mr. Archy would do, he’s in the stables, and it’s the best time to talk to him.”

“And if it’s the master you want,” chimed in another, “he’s your man.”

“Lead me to him, then,” said I, resolving, at least, to see the person who claimed to be supreme in this strange household. Traversing a number of passages, and dirty, ill-kept rooms, we descended by a small stone stair into an ample courtyard, two sides of which were occupied by ranges of stables. The spacious character of the building, and the costly style of the arrangements, were evident at a glance; and even a glance was all that I had time for, when my guide, whispering “There is Mr. Archy,” hurriedly withdrew and left me. The person indicated was standing as if to examine a young horse which had met with some accident, for the animal could scarcely move, and with the greatest difficulty could bring up his hind legs.

I had time to observe him; and certainly, though by no means deficient as regarded good features, I had rarely seen anything so repulsive as the expression of his face. Coarsely sensual and brutal, they were rendered worse by habits of dissipation and debauch; and in the filmy eye and the tremulous lip might be read the signs of habitual drunkenness. In figure, he was large and most powerfully built, and if not over-fleshy, must have been of great muscular strength.

“Shoot him, Ned,” he cried, after a few minutes of close scrutiny, “he’s as great a cripple as old Joe himself.”

“I suppose, your honour,” said the groom, “there’s nothing else to be done—it’s in the back it is.”

“I don’t care a curse where it is,” said the other, savagely; “I only know when a horse can’t go. You can put a bullet in him, and more’s the pity all other useless animals are not as easily disposed of. And who is our friend here?” added he, turning and approaching where I stood.

I briefly said that I was a stranger, desirous of seeing and speaking with Mr. Curtis; that my business was one of importance, not less to myself than to him, and that I would feel obliged if he could procure me the opportunity I sought for.

“If you talk of business, and important business,” said he, sternly, “you ought to know, if you haven’t heard it already,

that the man you want to discuss it with is upwards of a hundred years of age—that he is a doating idiot; and that, for many a day, the only one who has given any orders here now stands before you.”

“In that case,” said I, courteously, “I am equally prepared to address myself to him. Will you kindly accord me an interview?”

“Are you a dun?” said he, rudely.

“No,” said I, smiling at the abruptness of the demand.

“Are you a tenant in arrear of his rent? or wanting an abatement?”

“Neither one nor the other.”

“Are you sent by a friend with a hostile message?”

“Not even that,” said I, with impassive gravity.

“Then, what the devil are you?” said he, rudely, “for I don’t recognize you as one of my friends or acquaintances.”

I hesitated for a moment what reply I should make to this coarsely-uttered speech. Had I reflected a little longer, it is possible that good sense might have prevailed, and taught me how inopportune was the time for such reprisals; but I was stung by an insult offered in presence of many others; and in a tone of angry defiance answered,—

“You may discover to your cost, sir, that my right to be here is somewhat better than your own, and that the day is not very distant when your presence in this domain will be more surely questioned than is mine now. Is that name new to you?” And as I spoke I handed him my card, whereupon, with my name, the ancient arms of my family were also engraved. A livid paleness suddenly spread over his features as he read the words, and then as quickly his face became purple red.

“Do you mean,” said he, in a voice guttural with passion, “do you mean to impose upon a man of my stamp with such stupid balderdash as that? And do you fancy that such a paltry attempt at a cheat will avail you here? Now, I’ll show you how we treat such pretensions without any help from lawyers. Garvey,” cried he, addressing one of the grooms who stood by, laughing heartily at his master’s wit, “Garvey, go in and rouse the gentlemen; tell them to dress quickly and come downstairs, for I’ve got sport for them: and you, Mick, saddle Ranty for me, and get out the dogs. Now, Mr. Carew, I like fair play, and so I’ll give you fifteen minutes law. Take the shortest cut you can out of these grounds; for, by the rock of Cashel, if you’re caught, I wouldn’t be in your skin for a trifle.”

A regular burst of savage laughter from the bystanders met

this brutal speech, and the men scattered in all directions to obey the orders, while I, overwhelmed with passion, stood motionless in the now deserted yard. M'Clean himself had entered the house, and it was only when a signal from one of the grooms attracted my notice that I remarked his absence.

"This way—this way, sir, and don't lose a second," said the man; "take that path outside the garden wall, and cross the nursery beyond it. If you don't make haste, it's all over with you."

"He wouldn't dare——"

"Wouldn't he," said he, stopping me. "It's little you know him. The dogs themselves has more mercy than himself, when his blood is up."

"Get the cob ready for me, Joe," cried a half-dressed man from one of the upper windows of the house, "and a snaffle bridle, remember."

"Yes, sir," was the quick reply. "That's ould Delany of Shanestown, and a greater devil there isn't from this to his own place. Blood and ages," cried he, addressing me, "won't you give yourself a chance; do you want them to tear you to pieces where you stand?"

The man's looks impressed me still more than his words; and though I scarcely believed it possible that my peril could be such as he spoke of, the terrified faces about me struck fear into my heart.

"Would men stand by," cried I, "and see such an infamous cruelty?"

"Arrah! how could we help it?" said one, stopping me; "and if you won't do anything for yourself, what use can we be?"

"There, be off you, in the name of heaven," said another, pushing me through a small door that opened into a shrubbery; "down that lane as fast as you can, and keep to the right after you pass the fish pond."

"It wouldn't be bad to swim to one of the islands!" muttered another; but the counsel was overruled by the rest.

By this time, the contagion of terror had so completely seized upon me, that I yielded myself to the impulse of the moment, and, taking the direction they pointed out, I fled along the path beneath the garden wall at full speed.

In the unbroken stillness I could hear nothing but the tramp of my own feet, or the rustling of the branches as I tore through them. I gained at last the open fields, and with one hurried glance behind to see that I was not pursued, still dashed

onwards. The young cattle started off at full speed as they saw me, and the snorting horses galloped wildly here and there as I went.

Again, beneath the shade of a wood I would have halted to repose myself, but suddenly a sound came floating along the air, which swelled louder and louder, till I could recognize in it the deep, hoarse bay of dogs, as in wild chorus they yelped together, and high above all could be heard the more savage notes of men's voices cheering them on and encouraging them. With the mad speed of terror, I now fled onward; the very air around me seeming to resound with the dreadful cries of my pursuers. Now tumbling headlong over the tangled roots, now dashing recklessly forward through stony water-courses or fissured crevices of ground, I ran with mad impulse, heedless of all peril but one. At some moments the deafening sounds of the wild pack seemed close about me; at others, all was still as the grave around.

— I had forgotten every direction the men had given me, and only thought of pressing onward without any thought of whither. At last I came to a rapid but narrow river, with steep and rugged banks at either side. To place this between myself and my pursuers seemed the best chance of escape, and without a second's hesitation I dashed into the stream. Far stronger than I had supposed, the current bore me down a considerable distance, and it was not till after a long and tremendous effort that I gained the bank. Just as I had reached it, the wild cry of the dogs again met my ears; and, faint and dripping as I was, once more I took to speed.

Through dark woods and waving plains of tall grass, over deep tillage ground, and through the yellow corn, I fled like one bereft of reason—the terror of a horrible and inglorious death urging me on to efforts that my strength seemed incapable of making. Cut and bleeding in many places, my limbs were at last yielding to fatigue, when I saw at a short distance in front of me, a tall but dilapidated stone wall. With one last effort I reached this, and, climbing by the crevices, gained the top. But scarcely had I gained it when my head reeled, my senses left me, and, overcome by sickness and exhaustion, I fell headlong to the ground beneath. It was already evening when I came to myself, and still lay there stunned, but uninjured. A wild plain, studded over with yellow furze bushes, lay in front, and beyond in the distance I could see the straggling huts of a small village. It was a wild and dreary scene; but the soft light of a summer's evening beamed calmly over it, and the

silence was unbroken around. With an effort I arose, and though weak and sorely bruised, found that I could walk. My faculties were yet so confused, that of the late events I could remember but little with any distinctness. At times I fancied I had been actually torn and worried by savage dogs; and then I would believe that the whole was but a wild and feverish dream, brought on by intense anxiety and care. My tattered and ragged clothes, clotted over with blood, confused, but did not aid, my memory. And thus struggling with my thoughts, I wandered along, and, as night was falling, reached the little village of Shanestown. Directing my steps towards a cabin where I perceived a light, I discovered that it was the ale-house of the village. Two or three country people were sitting smoking on a bench before the door, who arose as I came forward, half in curiosity, half in respect; and as I was asking them in what quarter I might find a lodging for the night, the landlord came out. No sooner did his eyes fall on me than he started back in seeming terror, and, after a pause of a few seconds, cried out,—

“Molly! Molly! come here quick! Who’s that standing there?” said he, as he pointed with his finger towards me.

“The heavens be about us! but it’s Mr. Walter Carew himself,” said the woman, crossing herself.

This sudden recognition of my resemblance to my father so overcame me, that though I struggled hard for speech, the words would not come; and I stood, pale and gasping, before them.

“For heaven’s sake, speak!” cried the man, in terror.

I heard no more—faint, agitated, and exhausted, I tottered towards the bank, and swooned away.





“‘For heaven’s sake, speak!’ cried the man, in terror.”

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE PERILS OF EVIL.

THE last few pages I mean to append to these notices of my life might be, perhaps, equally well derived from the public newspapers of the time. At a period when great events were occurring—when the conquering armies of France marched over the length and breadth of Europe—the humble historian of these pages was able, for a brief space, to engage public attention, and become, for a short season, the notoriety of the hour. I will not presume so far as to say that the fame to which I attained was of that kind which flatters most, or that the reputation attaching to me was above reproach. Still I had my partisans and adherents, nay, I believe I might even aver, my friends and well-wishers. He must, perchance, have had a fortunate existence who can say more.

Of what followed after the event detailed in my last chapter I can relate nothing, for I was seized with shivering and other signs of fever that same night, and for several weeks my life was despaired of. Even when the dangerous period passed over, my convalescence made but little progress. For me there were none of those aids which so powerfully assist the return to health. The sympathy of friends, the affections of family, the very hope of once more assuming one's place at hearth and board—I had none of these. If the past was filled with trouble and suffering, the future was a bleak expanse, that offered nothing to speculate on. My thoughts turned to the New World beyond the seas—to a region wherein nothing should recall a memory of the by-gone, and where even I might at last forget the early years of my own life. There were not then, as now, the rapid means of intercourse between this country and America; as little, too, was there of that knowledge of the great contingent of the west which now prevails. Men talked of it as a far-away land, only emerging into civilization, and whose vast regions were still untrodden and unexplored. Dreamy visions of the existence men might carve out for them-

selves in such a scene, formed the amusements of the long hours of my solitary sick bed. I fancied myself, at times, a lone settler on the bank of some nameless river; and, at other moments, as a member of some Indian tribe, following their fortunes to the chase and to the battle-field, and dreaming through life in the uneventful stillness of the forest.

In part from the effect of malady itself, in part from this dreamy state of mind, I sank into a state of impassive lethargy, wherein nothing pleased or displeased me. Worse than actual despondency, a sense of indifference had settled down on all my feelings; and if I could have asked a boon, it would have been to have been left utterly alone. To reply when spoken to became irksome; even to listen was a painful exertion to me. Looking back now on this period, it seems to me that such intervals of apathetic repose are often inserted in the lives of men of more than ordinary activity, acting as sleep does in our habitual existence, and serving to rest and recruit faculties overcharged and over-worked.

I was in a very humble lodging in a very humble street, still attended by doctors, and besieged by lawyers and solicitors, who came and went, held consultations, questioned and cross-questioned me with a greedy avidity on themes in which my own interest had long ceased, and which I was gradually learning to think of with absolute aversion.

Ysaïch, whose confidence in our success rose higher every day, appeared from time to time to see me; but his visits were generally hurried ones, as he was constantly on the road, travelling hither and thither, exploring registries here, and certificates there, and fortifying our case by every possible means he could think of. His energy was untiring; and in the shrewd devices of his quick intelligence, even the long-practised acuteness of the lawyers discovered great resources.

Paragraphs of a half mysterious kind in the public newspapers announced to the world that a most remarkable case might ere long transpire, and a claim be preferred, which should threaten the possession of one of the largest estates in a county adjacent to the metropolis. To these succeeded others, more openly expressed, in which it was announced that some of the most distinguished members of the inner bar had received retainers for a cause that would soon astonish the world, wherein the plaintiff was represented to be the son and heir of one who once had figured most conspicuously in the fashionable and political circles of Dublin.

As the time approached for bringing the case to trial, it was

judged expedient that I should be provided with lodgings in a more fashionable quarter of the town, be seen abroad in places of public resort, and, in fact, a certain *éclat* be imparted to my presence, which should enlist, so far as might be, popular feeling in my favour. The chief adviser and leader of my case was a lawyer of great repute in the Irish bar of those days—a certain Samuel Hanchett—one of those men who owe their success in life less to actual learning than to the possession of immense natural acuteness, great resources in difficulty, and a vast acquaintance with all the arts of their fellow-men. There had been, I believe, considerable difficulty in securing his services originally in our behalf. It was reported that he disliked such cases—that they were not what “suited him.” He made various objections when first addressed, and threw every discouragement when the cause was submitted for his opinion. He asked for evidence that was not to be obtained, and proofs that were not forthcoming. The merest accident—if I am justified in calling such what was to be followed by consequences so important to myself—overruled these objections on his part. It chanced that in one of my solitary walks on a Sunday afternoon, I happened to find myself at the bank of a little stream, near Milltown, with an elderly man, who seemed to have some apprehensions about crossing on the slippery and uncertain stepping-stones by which the passage was forded. Perceiving his difficulty I tendered my assistance to him at once, which he accepted. On arriving at the opposite bank, and finding that our roads led in the same direction, we began to converse together, during which my accidental pronunciation of a word with a slightly foreign accent attracted his notice. To a question on his part, I mentioned that a great part of my life had been passed abroad; and amongst the places to which I alluded was Reichenau. He asked me in what year I had been there, and inquired if by any chance I had ever heard of a certain school there, in which it was said the son of the late Duke of Orleans had been a teacher.

“You are speaking of Monsieur Jost, my old master?” said I, warmed up by even this passing remembrance of happier days.

“Will you pardon the liberty I am about to take,” said he, with some earnestness, “and allow me to ask, with whom I have the honour to speak?”

“My name is Jasper Carew, sir,” said I, with a degree of stern pride a man feels in asserting a claim that he knows may be contested.

"Jasper Carew!" repeated he, slowly, while he stood still and stared steadfastly at me—"Jasper Carew! You are then the claimant to the estates of Castle Carew and Crone Lofty in Wicklow?"

"The property of my late father," said I, assentingly.

"What a singular coincidence should have brought us together," said he, after a pause. "Do you know, sir, that when you overtook me half an hour ago, and saw me standing on the side of the stream there, I was less occupied in thinking how I should cross it than how I could reconcile certain strange statements which had been made to me respecting your claim. I am Mr. Hanchett, sir, the counsel to whom your case has been submitted."

"It is indeed a curious accident that has brought us thus in contact," exclaimed I, in surprise.

"I should like to give it another name, young gentleman," said he, thoughtfully, while he walked along at my side for some moments in silence. "Has it ever been explained to you, Mr. Carew," said he, gravely, "what dangers attend such a course of proceeding as you are now engaged in? How necessarily you must be prepared to give in your adhesion to many things your advisers deem essential, and of which you can have no cognizance personally—in a word, how frequently you will be forced into a responsibility which you never contemplated or anticipated? Have all these circumstances been placed fairly and clearly before you?"

"Never!" replied I.

"Then suffer me to endeavour, in a very few words, to show you some at least of the perils I allude to." In a few short and graphic sentences he stated my case, with all its favourable points, forcibly, and well delineated. He then exhibited its various weaknesses and deficiencies, the assumptions for which no proofs were forthcoming, the positions which were taken, without power to maintain them. "To give the required coherence and consistency to these, your advisers will of course take all due precaution; but they will require aid also from you. You will be asked for information you have no means of obtaining, for details you cannot supply. A lawsuit is like a chase; the ardour of pursuit deadens every sense of peril, and in the desire to win, you become reckless for the cost. I perceive," said he, "that you demur to some of this; but remember, that as yet you have not entered the field, that you have only viewed the sport from afar, and its passions of hope and fear are all untasted by you!"

"It may be as you say," said I, "and that hereafter I may seem to feel differently; but for the present I can promise you, that to secure a verdict in my favour, not only would I not strain any point myself, but I would not condescend to accept the benefit of such a sacrifice from another. I believe—I have strong reasons to believe, that I am asserting a rightful claim; the arguments that shall be sufficient to convince others that I am wrong, will, doubtless, be strong enough to satisfy me."

He had fixed his eyes steadily on me while I was speaking these words, and I could easily perceive that the impression they produced on him was favourable. He then led me on to speak of my life and its vicissitudes, and I could detect in many of his questions that he had formed erroneous notions as to various parts of my story. I cannot attempt to explain why it was so; but the fact unquestionably was, that I opened my heart more freely and unreservedly to this stranger than I had ever done to any of those with whom I had before conversed; and when we parted at length, it was like old friends.

The accident of our meeting was not known to others, and there was considerable astonishment excited when it was heard that Hanchett, who had hitherto shown no disposition to engage in the cause, now accepted the brief, and exhibited the warmest anxiety for success. His acute intelligence quickly detected many things which had been passed over as immaterial, and by his activity various channels of information were opened which others had not thought of. In these details Ysaffich came more than once before him; and it was remarkable with what shrewdness he read the man's nature, bold, resolute, and unscrupulous as it was. Between the two, the feeling of distrust rapidly ripened into open hatred, each not hesitating to accuse the other of treachery; and thus was a new element of difficulty added to a case whose complications were already more than enough.

My own position at this period was embarrassing in the extreme. Hanchett frequently invited me to his house, and presented me freely to his friends; while Ysaffich continued to suggest doubts of his good faith on every occasion, and by a hundred petty slights showed his implacable enmity towards him. Day after day this breach grew wider and wider, every effort of the one being sure to excite the animosity and opposition of the other. Ysaffich, too, far from endeavouring to repress this spirit on his part, seemed to foster and encourage it, sneering at the old lawyer's caution and reserve, and even insinuating against him darker and more treacherous intentions.

"To what end," said he, at length, one morning when our discussion had become unusually warm and animated, "to what end the inquiries to which this learned adviser of yours would push us; he wants to discover the Countess of Gabriac and Raper. Why, bethink you, my worthy friend, that these are the very people we hope never to hear more of—that if, by any mischance, they could possibly be forthcoming, our whole scheme is blown up at once. We have now enough, or we shall have enough by the end of the month, to go to a jury. There is not a document nor a paper that will not, in some form or other, be supplied. Let us stand or fall by that issue; but of all things, let us not protract the campaign till the arrival of the forces that shall overwhelm us. If this be your policy, Master Gervois, speak it out freely, and let us be frank with each other."

There was a tone of bold defiance in this speech that startled me; but the way in which he addressed me, as Gervois, a name he had never called me by for several months, in even our closest intimacy, was like a declaration of open hostility.

"I claim to be called Jasper Carew," said I, calmly and slowly; "I will accept no other designation from you nor any one."

"You have learned your part admirably," said he, with a sneer; "but remember that I am myself the prompter; so pray reserve the triumphs of your art for the public!"

"Anatole," said I, addressing him with an emotion I could not repress, "I desire to be frank and candid with you. This name of Jasper Carew I believe firmly to be mine."

A burst of laughter, insulting to the last degree, stopped me in my speech.

"Why, Gervois, this is madness, my worthy fellow. Just bethink you of how this plot originated; who suggested, who carried it on; ay, and where it stands at this very moment. That you yourself are as nothing in it; the breath that made can still unmake you; and that I have but to declare you an impostor and a cheat—hard words, but you will have them—and the law will deal with you as it know how to deal with those who trade on false pretences. Yours be the blame if I be pushed to such reprisals!"

"And what if I defied you, Count Ysaffich?" said I, boldly.

"If you but dared to do it!" said he, with a menace of his clenched hand.

"Now listen to me calmly," said I; "and there is the more need of calm, since, possibly, these are the very last words that

shall ever pass between us. My claim can neither be aided nor opposed by you."

"Is the fellow mad?" exclaimed he, staring wildly at me.

"I am in my calm and sober senses," replied I, quietly.

"Then what say you to this bond?" said he, taking a paper from his pocket-book. "Is this a written promise, that if you succeed to the fortune and estates of the late Walter Carew, you will pay me, Count Anatole Ysaffich, one hundred thousand pounds?"

"I own every word of it," said I.

"And for what service is this the recompense—answer me that?"

"That I am indebted to you for having opened to me the path by which my right was to be established."

"Say rather, that by me was the fraud of a false name, and birth, and rank, first suggested; that from Gervois the courier, I created you Carew the gentleman. The whole scheme was and is my own. You are as nothing in it."

Stupified—almost stunned by the outrageous insult of his words, I did not speak, and he went on,—

"But you have not taken me unawares. I was not without my suspicion, that such an incident as this might arise. I foresaw at least its possibility, and was prepared for it. Be advised then in time, since if your foot was on the very threshold of that door you hope to call your own, the power lies with me to drag you back again, and proclaim you to all the world a swindler."

My passion boiled over at the word, and I sprung towards him, I know not with what thoughts of vengeance. He darted back suddenly, and gained the door.

"If you had dared," said he, with a savage grin, "you had been a corpse on that floor the minute after."

The shining blade of a stiletto glanced within his waistcoat, as he spoke. The next moment he had descended the stairs, and was gone.

I will not speak of the suffering this scene cost me—a misery, I am free to declare, less proceeding from my dread of his resentment, than from the thought that one of the very few with whom I had ever lived on terms approaching friendship, had now become a declared and bitter enemy. Oh! for the hollowness of such attachments! The bonds which bind men to evil are the deadliest snares that beset us: and thus the very qualities which seem our best and purest, are among the weakest and the worst of our depraved natures.

To add to my discomfiture, Hanchett was obliged to go over to London, in some case before the House of Lords, and my cause was entrusted to the second counsel, one with whom I had little intercourse, and few opportunities of knowing. Ysaffich's defection, too, threw a great gloom over all my supporters. His readiness in every difficulty was not less remarkable than his unwearied and untiring energy. He was, in fact, the bond of union between all the parties, stimulating, encouraging, and cheering them on. Even they who were least disposed towards him personally, avowed that his loss was irreparable; and some, taking a still graver view of the matter, owned their fears that he might seek service with the enemy.

I cannot tell the relief I experienced on hearing that he had sailed from Ireland the very night of our quarrel; and from the observations he had dropped, it was believed with the intention of going abroad.

As the day fixed for the trial drew nigh, public curiosity rose to the very highest degree. The real nature of the claim to be set up was no longer a secret, and the case became the town talk of every club and society of the capital. Curtis had long ceased to be popular with any party. His dissolute life had thrown a disrepute upon those who sided with him; and the newspapers, almost without an exception, inclined towards my side. There is, perhaps, something too that savours of generosity in such cases, and disposes many to favour what they feel to be the weaker party. I am sure I had reason to experience much of this kind of sympathy, nor do I think of it even now without gratitude.

Early as it was when I prepared to leave my hotel, I found a considerable crowd had assembled in the street without, curious to see one whose story had attracted so much popular notice. They were mostly of the lower classes, but I observed that a knot of gentlemen had gathered on the steps of an adjoining door, and were eagerly watching for my appearance. As the window of my room was almost directly over their heads, and lay open, I could hear the conversation which passed between them. Shall I own that the words I overheard set my heart a beating violently.

"You knew Carew intimately, Parsons?" asked one.

"Watty! to be sure I did. We were class-fellows at school and at College."

"And liked him, I have heard you say?"

"Extremely. There was no better fellow to be found. He had his weaknesses like the rest of us; but he was a true-hearted, generous friend, and a resolute enemy also."

"Were you acquainted with his wife, Ned?" asked another.

"I was presented to her the day he brought her over," replied he; "we all lunched with him at the hotel, but I never saw her after. The fact was, Watty made a foolish match, and never was the same man to his old friends after. Perhaps we were as much in fault as he was; at all events, except Mac Naghten, and a few who were very intimate with him, all fell off, and Carew, who was a haughty fellow, drew back from us, and left the breach still wider."

"And what's your opinion of this claim?" asked another, who had not spoken before.

"That I'd not give sixpence for the chance of its success," said he, laughingly. "Why, everybody knows that no trace of any document establishing Carew's marriage could be found after his death. Some went so far as to say that there never had been a marriage at all; and as to the child, Dan McNaghten told me years ago, that the boy was killed in some street skirmish in Paris—so that, taking all the doubts and difficulties together, and bearing in mind that old Joe Curtis has a strong purse and is in possession, is there any man with common sense to guide him would think the contest worth a trial?"

"Have you seen this young fellow yet?"

"No; and I am rather curious to have a look at him, for there were strong family traits about the Carews."

As I heard these last words, I walked boldly out upon the balcony as if to examine the state of the weather. There was a slight murmur of voices heard beneath as I came forward, and one speaker exclaimed—"Indeed!" to which Parsons quickly replied—

"Positively astounding! It is not only that he has Carew's features, but the carriage of the head, and a certain half supercilious look, are exactly his!"

The words sent a thrill of hope through me, more than enough to recompense me for the pain his former speech had inflicted; and as I left the window, I felt a degree of confidence in the future that never entirely deserted me after.



CHAPTER XLIX.

THE FIRST DAY.

I CAN more easily imagine a man being able to preserve the memory of all his sensations during some tremendous operation of surgery, than to recall the varied tortures of his mind in the progress of a long and eventful trial. Certain incidents will impress themselves more powerfully than others—not always those of the deepest importance—far from it; the veriest trifles—a stern look of the presiding judge, a murmur in the court, will live in the recollection for long years after the great events of the scene; and a casual glance, a half-uttered word, become texts of sorrow for many a day to come.

I could myself be better able to record my sensations throughout a long fever, than tell of the emotions which I suffered in the three days of that trial. I awake occasionally from a dream full of every circumstance all sharply defined, clear and distinct. My throbbing temples and moist brow evidence the agonies I have gone through; my nerves still tingle with the torture; but with the first moments of wakefulness the memory is gone!—the sense of pain alone remains, but the cause fades away in dim indistinctness, and my heart throbs with gratitude at last to know it was but a dream, and has passed away.

But there are days, too, when all these memories are revived; and I could recount, even to the slightest circumstance, the whole progress of the case, from the moment when a door-keeper drew aside a heavy curtain to let me pass into the court, to the dreadful instant when——. But I cannot go on; already are images and forms crowding around me. To continue this theme would be to call up spirits of torture to the bed-side, or the lonely chamber where, friendless and solitary, I sit, as I write these lines.

I owe it to him whose patience and sympathy may have carried him so far as my listener, to complete this much of the story of my life; happily a few words will now suffice to do so.

A newspaper of "Old Dublin," a great authority in those days, the *Morning Advertiser*, informed its readers on a certain

day of February, that the interesting events of a recent trial should be its apology for any deficiency in its attention to foreign news, or even the domestic occurrences of the country, since the editor could not but participate in the intense anxiety felt by all classes of his fellow-citizens in the progress of one of the most remarkable cases ever submitted before a jury.

After a brief announcement of the trial, he proceeds:—

“Mr. Foxley opened the plaintiff’s case, in the absence of Serjeant Hanchett, and certainly even the distinguished leader of the western circuit never exceeded in clearness, accuracy, or close reasoning, the admirable statement then delivered—a statement which, while supported by a vast variety of well-known incidents, may yet vie with romance for the strangeness of the events it records.

“Probably, with a view of enlisting public sympathy in his client’s behalf, not impossibly also to give a semblance of consistency to a narrative wherein any individual incident might have startled credulity, the learned counsel gave a brief history of the claimant from his birth; and certainly a stranger tale it would be hard to conceive. Following all the vicissitudes of fortune—fighting to-day in the ranks of the revolutionists in Paris, we find him to-morrow the bearer of important despatches from crowned heads to the members of the exiled family of France. Ever active, ever employed, and ever faithful to his trust, this extraordinary youth became mixed up with great events, and conversant with great people everywhere. If a consciousness that he was a man of birth, and with just claims to station and property, often sustained him in moments of difficulty, there were also times when this thought suggested his very saddest reflections. He saw himself poor, and almost unfriended; he knew the scarcely-passable barriers the law erects against all pretenders, whatever the justice of their demands; he was aware that his adversary would have all the benefit which vast resources and great wealth can command. No wonder, then, if he felt faint-hearted and dispirited! Another, and a very different train of reasoning may, possibly, have also had its influence on his mind.

“This boy grew up to manhood in the midst of all the startling theories of French revolution. He had imbibed the doctrines of equality and universal brotherhood—he had been taught that a state was a family, and its population were the children, amongst whom no inequality of condition should prevail. To sue for the restitution of his own was, then, but a sorry recognition, of the principles he professed. The society

of the time enjoined the theory that property was a mere usurpation; and I say, it is by no means improbable that, educated in such opinions, he should have deemed the prosecution of such a suit a direct falsification of his professions. The world, however, changed.

"After the revolution came the reaction of order. To the guillotine succeeded the court-martial—then the Consulate, then the Empire. All the external forms of society underwent a less change than did the very nature of men themselves.

"Wearied of anarchy, they sought the repose of a despotism. With monarchy, too, came back all the illusions of pomp and splendour—all the tastes that wealth fosters and wealth alone confers. Carew, who had never bewailed his condition when a *sans culotte*, now saw himself degraded in the midst of the new movement. He knew that he had been born to fortune and high estate. He had heard of the vast domains of his ancestry from his cradle. He had got off by heart the names of townlands and baronies that all belonged to his family; and though, at the time he learned the lesson, the more stern teaching of democracy instilled the maxim that 'all Property was a wrong,' yet now another impression had gained currency in the world, and he saw that even for the purposes of public utility, and the benefit of society, a man was powerless who was poor.

"Alas, however, for his prospects, every document, every letter, every scrap of writing that could have authenticated his claim was gone. Of the very nature of these papers he scarcely retains a recollection himself; he only knows that Madame de Gabriac, whose name I have already introduced to your notice, deemed them all-sufficient, if only backed by one essential document—the certificate of his father's marriage with his mother. To obtain this had been the great object of her whole life.

"With a heroic devotion to the cause of her friend's orphan child, she had travelled over Europe in every direction, and during times of the greatest peril and disturbance. Accompanied by one trusty companion, Mr. Raper, she had never wearied in her pursuit.

"Probably, if the occasion permitted, the story I could tell of her efforts in this cause would surprise you not less than that of my client himself. Enough that I say, that she stooped to poverty and privation of the very severest kind; she toiled, and laboured, and suffered for years long; and when, having exhausted every resource the Old World seemed to offer to her search, she set out for the New! Since that she has not

been heard of. The solicitors with whom she had corresponded have long since ceased to receive tidings of her. The belief in her death was so complete, that her father, a well-known citizen of Dublin, who died two years back, bequeathed his vast fortune to various charitable institutions, alleging his childless condition as the cause.

"I have told you how, originally, my client, then a mere boy, became separated from her he had ever regarded as his mother, I have traced him through some, but far from the whole, of the strange incidents of his eventful career; and it now only remains that I should speak of the extraordinary accident by which he came upon the clue to his long sought-for—long despaired-of inheritance.

"A short statement will suffice here, since the witnesses I mean to call before you will amply elucidate this part of my case. It was, while travelling with despatches to the north of Europe, my client formed acquaintance with a certain Count Ysaffich, at that time himself employed in the diplomatic service, and though at the period a warm friendship grew up between them, it was not till after the lapse of many years that the Count came to know that a large mass of papers—copies of documents drawn out by Raper, and which had come into the Count's hands in a manner I shall relate to you—actually bore reference to his former acquaintance—the casual intimate of a journey.

"These two men, thrown together by one of the most extraordinary chances of fortune, sit down to recount their lives to each other. Beside the fire of an humble chalet, in a forest, Carew hears again the story he had once listened to in his infancy; the very tale his dear mother had repeated to him in the midst of the Alps, he now hears from the lips of one almost a stranger. Names once familiar, but long forgotten, come back to him. The very sounds thrill through his heart, like as the notes of the Swiss melody awaken in the far-away wanderer thoughts of home and fatherland. In an instant he throws off the apathy of his former life—he ceases to be the sport and plaything of fortune, and devotes himself, heart and soul, to the restitution of the ancient name of his house and the long dormant honours of a distinguished family.

"We cannot," writes the journalist, "undertake at this late hour to follow the learned counsel into the minute enumeration he went into of small circumstances of proof, memoranda of conversations, scraps of letters, allusions in the course of correspondence, and so on; the object of which was to show,

that although the late Walter Carew had some secret reason of his own for maintaining a mystery about his marriage, that of the fact of the marriage there could be no doubt—nor of the legitimacy of him who claimed to be his heir; neither are we able to enter upon the intricate question of establishing the identity of the present claimant; suffice it to say, that he succeeded in connecting him with a number of events from the days of his earliest childhood to a comparatively recent period, all corroboratory of his assumption. The possession of the seal and arms of his family, his name, and, above all the unmistakable traits of family resemblance, being wonderful evidences in his favour. Indeed, we, are not aware of a more dramatic incident in the administration of justice than our court presented yesterday, when, at the close of his seven hours' speech, full of all its details, narrative and legal, the able counsel suddenly paused, and in a voice of subdued accent, asked if there chanced at that moment to be present in the court any of those who once enjoyed the friendship or even the acquaintance of the late Walter Carew. He was one, continued he, not easily to be forgotten, even by a casual observer. His tall, and manly figure, the type at once of dignity and strength, his bold, high forehead, his deep-set blue eyes, soft as a child's in their expression, or sparkling like the orbs of an eagle; his mouth more characteristic than all, since though marked by an air of pride, it never moved without an expression of genial kindness and good-humour, the traits that we love to think eminently national; the mingled nature of daring intrepidity, with a careless ease; the dash of almost reckless courage, with a still milder gaiety—these were all his. Are there not some here—is there not even one who can recall them? And if there be, let him look there! and he pointed to the gallery beside the jury-box, at the end of which was seated a young man, pale, and sickly-looking, it is true, but whose countenance at once corroborated the picture. The vast multitude that filled the body of the court, crowding every avenue and space, and even invading the seats reserved for the Bar, rose as one man, and turned to gaze on the living evidence of the description. It would be difficult to conceive a more striking scene enacted within walls where the solemnity of the law usually represses every semblance of popular emotion; nor was it till after several seconds had elapsed that the judges were enabled to recall the Court to the observance of the rigid propriety of the justice-seat.

“Himself exhausted by his efforts, and really overborne by

feeling, the counsel was unable to continue his address, and the Court, willingly granting an indulgence that his exertions amply deserved, adjourned till to-morrow, when at ten o'clock this remarkable case will be resumed; though, it is believed, from the number of witnesses to be examined, and the necessary length of 'the reply,' the trial cannot be completed before Saturday evening."



CHAPTER L.

A TRIAL—CONCLUSION.

THE second day was chiefly occupied in examining witnesses—old acquaintances of my father's, for the most part who had known him on his return to Ireland, and who could bear their testimony as to the manner in which he lived, and the acceptance he and my mother had met with in the best society of the capital. Though their evidence really went no further than a mere impression on their part, it was easy to perceive that its effect was most favourable on the jury; nor could cross-examination elicit the slightest flaw in the belief, that they lived amongst their equals without the shadow of aspersion on their honour.

An uninterested spectator of the scene might have felt amusement in contrasting the description of manners and habits, with the customs of the present time; for although the evidence referred to a period so recent, yet were all the details mixed up with usages, opinions, and ways, that seemed those of a long-past epoch. Men were just then awakening after that long and splendid orgie which had formed the life of Ireland before the Union. With bankrupt fortunes and ruined estates, they saw themselves the successors of a race, whose princely hospitalities had never known a limit, and who had really imparted a character of barbaric splendour to lives of reckless extravagance.

A certain Mr. Archdall was examined as to his recollection of Castle Carew, and the company who frequented there. He had been my father's guest when the Viceroy visited him; and

certainly his account of the festivities might well have startled the credulity of his hearers. It was not at first apparent with what object these revelations were elicited by the cross-examination, but at length it came out that they were intended to show that my father having no heir, nor expecting to have any, suffered himself to follow a career of the wildest wastefulness. With equal success they drew forth from the witness stories of my mother's unpopularity with the ladies of her own set in society, and the suspicion and distrust that pervaded the world of fashion, that she had not originally been born in, or belonged to, the class with which she was then associating.

It was but too plain to what all this pointed; and although old servants of the family were brought forward to show the deference with which my mother's position was ever regarded, and the degree of respect, almost amounting to state, with which she was treated, yet the artfulness of the cross-examiner had at least succeeded in representing her to the jury as self-willed, vain, and capricious, constantly longing for a return to France, and cordially hating her banishment to Ireland. My mother's friendship and attachment to Polly Fagan was ingeniously alluded to as a strange incident in the life of one whose circumstances might seem to have separated her from such companionship; and the able counsel dwelt most effectively on the disparity which separated their conditions.

These circumstances were, however, not pressed home, but rather left to make their impression, with more or less of force, while other incidents were being related. To rebut in some measure these impressions, Foxley showed that my mother had been a guest at the Viceroy's table—an honour which could not have been conferred on her on any questionable grounds. Unimportant and trivial as was the fact, the mode of eliciting it formed one of the amusing episodes of the trial, since it brought forward on the witness-table a well-known character of old Dublin—no less a functionary than Samuel Cotterell, the hall trumpeter, now pensioned off, and retired, but still, with all the weight of nearly four-score-and-ten years, bearing himself erect, and carrying in his port the consciousness of his once high estate and dignity.

It was some time before the old man could be persuaded, that in all the state and pomp of the justice-seat there was not occasion for some exercise of his ancient functions. He seemed ashamed at appearing without his tabard, and looked anxiously around for his trumpet; but once launched upon the subject of his recollections, he appeared to revel with eager delight in all the

associations they called up. It was perfectly miraculous to see with what tenacity he retained a memory of the festivities of old Vice-regal times; they lived, however, in his mind like distinct pictures, unconnected with all around him. There was a duke in his "garter," and a duchess in her diamonds; a gorgeously decked table; pineapples that came from France; and a dessert wine newly arrived from Portugal, some of which Sir Amyrald Fitzgerald spilled on Madame Carew's dress; at which she laughed pleasantly, and, in showing the stains displayed her ankles to Barry Rutledge, who whispered his Grace that there was not such a foot and leg in Ireland. Lord Garty-more backed Kitty O'Dwyer's for fifty pounds, and lost his wager.

"How, then, was the bet decided, Mr. Cotterell?"

"We saw her dance the minuet with Colonel Candler, and my lord said he had lost."

"Madame Carew was, then, much admired at Court?"

"She was."

"And a favourite guest, too?"

"We asked her on Wednesdays generally; they were the small dinners, but many thought them the pleasantest."

"Her Grace noticed her particularly, you say?"

"She did so on one Patrick's night, and said she had never seen such lace before; and Madame Carew told her she would show her some still handsomer, for it had been given by the king to her grandmother, whom I think they called Madame Barry, or Du Barry, or something like that."

Though little in reality beyond the gossiping revelation of a very old man, Cotterell's evidence tended to show that my mother had been a welcome and a favoured guest in all the best houses of the day, and that living as she did in the very centre of scandal, not the slightest imputation had been ever thrown upon her position or her conduct.

The counsel probably saw that not having any direct proof of the marriage—when, and how, and where solemnized—it was more than ever necessary to show the rank my mother had always occupied in the world, and the respect with which she was ever received in society.

He had—I know not with what, if any, grounds—a little narrative of her family and birthplace, in France, and most conveniently disposed of all belonging to her, fortune, friends and home, by the events of "that disastrous revolution which swept away not only the nobles of the land, but every archive and document that had pertained to them."

When he came to my own birth, he was fortunate enough to obtain all the evidence he wanted. The priest of Rathmullen, who had officiated at my christening, was yet alive, and related, with singular clearness of recollection, every circumstance of that sorrowful night when the tidings of my father's violent death reached the village beside Castle Carew. Of those present on this occasion, among whom were Polly Fagan and MacNaghten, he could not yet point to where one could be found.

There now only remained to sum up the evidence, and impart that consistency and coherence to the story which should carry conviction to the minds of the jury, and this task he performed with a most consummate ability, concluding all with an account of my own visit to the home of my fathers, and the reception which there had met me. The passionate vehemence of his indignation seemed fired by the theme; and warming as he proceeded, he denounced the infamy of that morning as not only a stain upon the nation but the age, and called upon the jury, whatever their decision might be in the cause itself—whether to restore the heir to his own, or send him a beggared wanderer through the world—to mark by some expression of their own, the horror and disgust this act of barbaric cruelty had filled them with.

A burst of applause and indignation commingled saluted the orator as he sat down; nor was it till after repeated efforts of the criers that silence was again restored, and the business of the trial proceeded with.

Mr. McClelland, to whom the chief duty of the defence was entrusted, requested permission of the court to defer the reply to the following day, and the leave being granted the court arose.

I dined that day with Mr. Foxley. I would fain have been alone. The intense excitement of the scene had made me feverish, and I would gladly have felt myself at ease, and free to give way, in solitude, to the emotions which were almost suffocating me; but he insisted on my presence, and I went. The company included many very distinguished names,—members of both Houses of Parliament, and men of high consideration, and by all of them was I received with more than kindness, and some went so far as to congratulate me on a victory which, if not yet gazetted, was just as certainly achieved.

I dare not trust myself to dwell on this subject; the tremors of hope and fear I then went through threaten even yet to come

back in memory. A few more words and I have done. Would that I could spare myself the pain of these ; but it cannot be so—my task must be completed.

I suppose that very few persons have ever formed a rightful estimate of the extent to which the skill and cleverness of an able lawyer have enabled him to wound their feelings, and insult their self-love. I conclude this to be the case, not alone from my own brief and unhappy experience, but from reading a vast number of trials and always experiencing a sense of astonishment at the powerful perversity of these men. The cruel insinuation, the imputed meanness, the perversion of meaning, the insinuations of unworthy motive, are all acquired and cultivated, like the feints and parries of an accomplished fencer. The depreciation of a certain testimony, and the exaggerated estimate of some other—the sneering acknowledgment of this, or the triumphant assertion of that—the dark menace of a hidden meaning here, and the subtle insinuation that there was more than met the eye there, are all studied and practised efforts, as artificial as the stage-trick of the actor. And yet how little does all our conviction of this artifice avail against their influence !

Bad as these are, they are as nothing to the resources in store, when the object is to assail the reputation and blacken the character ; to hold up some poor fellow-man—frail and erring as he may be—to everlasting shame, and mark him with ignominy for ever. Alas ! for the best and purest, what an alloy of meanness and littleness, what vanity and self-seeking mingle with their very noblest and highest efforts. What need, then, to overwhelm the guilty with more than his guilt, and quote the “HEART” in the indictment as well as the CRIME? No, no ; if the best be not all good, believe me the worst are not all and hopelessly depraved. I have a right to speak of these things, as one who has felt them. For eight hours and more I listened to such a character of myself as made me sick, to very loathing, at my own identity. I heard a man in a great assembly denounce me as one of the most corrupt and infamous of mankind ! I felt the eyes that were turned towards me, I almost thought I overheard the muttered reprobation that surrounded me. A number of the incidents of my changeful life—how learned I know not—were related with every exaggeration and every perversion that malice could invest them with. For awhile, a sense of guiltlessness supported me ; I knew many of the accusations to be false, others grossly overstated. The scenes in which I was often depicted as an actor, had either no existence, or were

falsehoods, based upon some small germ of truth; and yet I heard them detailed with a semblance of reality, and a degree of coherence as to time and place, that smote me with very terror, since, though I might deny, I could not disprove them.

To stamp me as an impostor, and my claim as a cheat, appeared to be the entire line of the defence. Indeed, he avowed openly, that with all the evidence so painstakingly elicited by the opposite counsel, he should not trouble the jury with one remark. "When I tell you," said he, "who this claimant really is, and how his claim originated, you will forgive me that I have not embarrassed you with details quite irrelevant to this action, since of Walter Carew, or of any descendant of his, there is no question here! I will produce before you on that table, I will leave him to all the ingenuity of my learned friend to cross-examine, one who shall account to you how the first impulse to this daring imposture was conceived. You will be astounded. It will be, I am aware, a tremendous tax upon your credulity to compass it; but I will show to your entire conviction, that the man who aspires to the rank of an Irish gentleman, a vast estate, and an illustrious name, is a foreigner of unknown origin, who began life as an emissary of the French revolutionary party. When secret treachery superseded the guillotine, he served as a spy; this trade failing, he fell into the straits and difficulties of the most abject poverty; the materials of that period of his history are, of course, difficult to come at. They who walk in such paths, walk darkly and secretly; but we may be able to display some, at least, of his actions at this time—one of them, at all events, will exhibit the character of the individual, and at the same time put you in possession of an incident which, in all likelihood, originated this extraordinary action.

"There may be some now present in this court sufficiently familiar with London to remember a certain character well known in the precincts of Charing Cross by the nickname of Gentleman Jack. To those not acquainted with this individual I may mention that he swept a crossing in that locality, and had, by a degree of pretension in his appearance, aided by a natural smartness in repartee, attracted notice from many of the idle loungers of fashion, who daily passed and re-passed there. I am not able to say if his gifts were in any respect above the common. Indeed I have heard that it was rather the singular fact, that a man in such a station should be remarkable for any claim to notice whatever, which endowed him with the popu-

larity he enjoyed. At all events, he was remarkable enough to be generally, I might say universally, known; and it was the caprice of certain fashionable folk to accord him a recognition as they passed by. This degree of attention was harmless, at least, and had it stopped at that point, might never have called for any reprobation; but modish follies occasionally take an offensive shape, and this man's pretension offered the opportunity to display such.

"You have all heard of Carlton House, gentlemen—of the society of wits who frequent there, and the charms of a circle in which the chief figure is not more distinguished for his rank than for the gifts which elevate social intercourse. To the freedom which this exalted personage permitted those who approached him thus nearly, there seemed to be scarcely any limit. Admitting them to his friendship, he endowed them with almost equality; and there was not a liberty nor a license which could be practised in ordinary polite intercourse, that was not allowed at that hospitable board.

"You might imagine that men who enjoyed such a privilege would have been guardedly careful against abusing it—you might fancy that even worldly motives might have rendered them cautious about imperilling the princely favour! Not so; they would seem to have lost every consciousness of propriety in the intoxication of this same flattery; and they actually dared to take a liberty with this Prince which had been more than hazardous if ventured upon with a gentlemen of private station.

"The story goes, that, offended by his royal highness having pronounced marked eulogium on the manners and breeding of an individual who was not of their set either in politics or society, one of the party—I am not disposed to give his name, if it can be avoided—dared to make a wager, that he would take a fellow off the streets, give him ruffles, and a dress-coat, and pass him off on the Prince as one of the most accomplished and well-bred men in Europe.

"Gentlemen, you may fancy that in this anecdote which I have taken the liberty to relate to you, I am endeavouring to compete with the very marvellous histories which my learned brother on the opposite side addressed to your notice. I beg most distinctly to disclaim all such rivalry. My story has none of those stirring incidents with which his abounded. The characters and the scene are all of home growth. It has neither remoteness in point of time, nor distance in country to lend it attraction. It has, however, one merit, which my

learned friend might reasonably envy, and this is, that it is true. Yes, gentlemen, every particular I have stated is a fact. I will prove it by a witness whose evidence will be beyond gainsay. The wager was accepted, and for a considerable sum, too, and a dinner party arranged as the occasion by which to test it. The secrecy which I wish to observe as to the actors in this most unpardonable piece of levity will prevent my mentioning the names of those most deeply implicated. One who does not stand in this unenviable category is now in court, and I will call him before you."

Colonel Whyte Morris was now called to appear, and, after a brief delay, a tall, soldier-like and handsome man, somewhat advanced in life, ascended the witness table. I had no recollection of ever having seen him before; but it is needless to say with what anxiety I followed every word he uttered.

The ordinary preliminaries over, he was asked if he remembered a certain dinner-party, of which he was a guest, on a certain day in the autumn of the year.

He remembered it perfectly, and recounted that it was not easily to be forgotten, since it took place to decide a very extraordinary wager, the circumstances of which he briefly related.

"Gentleman Jack was the individual selected by a friend of mine," said he, "and who should succeed in winning his royal highness's good opinion, so as to obtain a flattering estimate of his manners and good-breeding. To what precise extent the praise was to go was not specified. There was nothing beyond a gentleman-like understanding, that if Jack passed muster as a man of fashion and ton, his backer was to have won; if, on the contrary, the Prince should detect any anomalies in his breeding, so as to throw suspicion upon his real rank, then the wager was lost.

"I was present," said the Colonel, "when the ceremony of presenting him to the Prince took place; I did not know the man myself, nor had I the slightest suspicion of any trick being practised. I had recently returned from foreign service, and was almost a stranger to all the company. Standing close beside Colonel O'Kelly, however, I overheard what passed, and as the words were really very remarkable, under the circumstances, I have not forgotten them." Being asked to relate the incident, he went on.

"There was a doubt in what manner—I mean rather by what name—the stranger should be presented to his royal highness: some suggesting one name—others, a different one;

and O'Kelly grew impatient, almost angry, at the delay, and said, 'D—n it, called him something—what shall it be, Sheridan?' 'The King of the Beggars, say I,' cried Sheridan, and in a voice, as I thought, to be easily heard all around. 'Who was he?' asked O'Kelly. 'Bamfield Moore Carew,' answered the other. 'So be it, then,' said O'Kelly. 'Your royal highness will permit me to present a very distinguished friend of mine, recently arrived in England, and who, like every true Englishman, feels that his first homage is due to the Prince who rules in all our hearts.' 'Your friend's name?'—'Carew, your royal highness; but being a wanderer and a vagabond, he has gone by half-a-dozen names.' The Prince laughed, and turned to hear the remainder of a story that some one at his side was relating. Meanwhile the stranger had gone through his introduction, and as Mr. Carew was in succession presented to the other members of the company——"

"Was he never addressed by any other designation, Colonel?" asked the lawyer.

"Certainly not; on that evening, at least."

"Were you acquainted with his real name?"

"No; O'Kelly told me, the day after the dinner, that the fellow had made his escape from London, doubtless dreading the consequences of his freak, and all trace of him was lost."

"Should you be able to recognize him were you to see him again, Colonel Morris?"

"Unquestionably; his features were very marked, and I took especial notice of him as he sat at the card-table."

"Will you cast your eyes about you through the court, and inform us if you see him here at present."

The Colonel turned, and putting his glass to his eye, scanned the faces in the gallery, and along the crowded ranks beneath it. He then surveyed the body of the court, and at length fixed his glance on the inner bar, where, seated beside Mr. Foxley, I sat, pale, and almost breathless with terror. "There he is! that man next but one to the pillar; that is the man!"

It was the second time that I had stood beneath the concentrated stare of a vast crowd of people; but oh, how differently this from the last time! No longer with aspects of compassionate interest and kind feeling, every glance now was the triumphant sparkle over detected iniquity, the haughty look of insolent condemnation.

"Tell me of this—what does this mean?" wrote my adviser, on a slip of paper, and handed it, unperceived, to me.

"It is true!" whispered I, in an accent that almost rent my heart to utter.

The commotion in the court was now great, the intense anxiety to catch a sight of me added to the expressions of astonishment making up a degree of tumult that the officers essayed vainly to suppress. That the evidence thus delivered had been a great shock to my advisers was easily seen; and though Foxley proceeded to cross-examine the Colonel, the statement was not to be shaken.

"We purpose to afford my learned friend a further exercise for his ingenuity," said M'Clelland; "for we shall now summon to the table a gentleman who has known the plaintiff long and intimately; who knew him in his real character of secret political agent abroad; and who will be able not alone to give a correct history of the individual, but also to inform the jury by what circumstances the first notion of this most audacious fraud was first suggested, and how it occurred to him to assume the character and name he had dared to preface this suit by taking. Before the witness shall leave that table, I pledge myself to establish, beyond the possibility of a cavil, one of the most daring, most outrageous, and consummate pieces of rascality that has ever come before the notice of a jury. It is needless that I should say one word to exonerate my learned friends opposite—they could, of course, know nothing of the evidence we shall produce here this day; the worst that can be alleged against them will be, the insufficiency of their own searches, and the inadequacy of the proofs on which they began this suit. I can afford to reflect, however, upon their professional skill, as the recompense for not aspersing their reputation; and I will say that a more baseless, unsupported action never was introduced into a court of justice. Call Count Anatole Ysaffich!"

I shall not attempt to describe a scene, the humiliation of which no vindication of my honour can ever erase. For nearly three hours I listened to such details, not one of which I could boldly deny, and yet not one of which was the pure truth, that actually made me feel a perfect monster of treachery and corruption. Of that life which my own lawyer had given such a picturesque account, a new version was now to be heard; the history of my birth I had once given to Ysaffich, was all related circumstantially.

He tracked me as the "adventurer" through every event and incident of my career—ever aiming at fortune, ever failing; the hired spy of a party, the corrupt partisan of the press;

a fellow, in fact, without family, friends, or country, and just as bereft of every principle of honour.

Ysaffich went on to say, that having shown me Raper's letters and memoranda on one occasion, I had, on reading them, originated the notion of this suit, suggesting my own obscure birth and origin as sufficient to defy all inquiry or investigation. He represented me as stating that such actions were constantly brought, and as constantly successful; and even where the best grounds of defence existed, they who were in possession frequently preferred to compromise a claim rather than to contest it in open litigation. Though the Count always endeavoured to screen himself behind his ignorance of English law and justice, he made no scruple of avowing his own complicity in the scheme. He detailed all the earliest steps of the venture—where the family crest had been obtained; by whom it had been engraved on my visiting cards. He mentioned, with strict accuracy, the very date I had first assumed the name of Carew; he actually exhibited a letter written by me on the evening before, and in which I signed myself "Paul Gervois." With these matters of fact he mixed up other details, totally untrue—such as a mock certificate of my father's marriage at a small town in Normandy, and which I had never seen nor heard of till that moment. He convulsed the court with laughter by describing the way in which I used to rehearse the part of heir and descendant of Walter Carew before him; and after a vast variety of details, either wholly or partially untrue, he produced my written promise to pay him an enormous sum in the event of the success of the present action. Truly had the lawyer said, "such an exposure was never before witnessed in a court of justice." And now for above an hour did he continue to accumulate evidences of fraud and deception—in the allegations made by me before officials of the court; affidavits sworn to; documents attested before consuls in Holland; inaccuracies of expression: faults even of spelling, not very difficult to account for in one whose education and life for the most part had been spent abroad, were all quoted and adduced, as showing the actual insolence of presumption which had marked every step of this imposture.

The Court interrupted the counsel at this juncture by an observation which I could not hear, to which the lawyer replied, "It shall be as your lordship suggests; though, were I permitted a choice, I should infinitely prefer to probe this foul wound to its last depth. I would far rather display this

consummate impostor to the world, less as a punishment to himself than as a warning and a terror to others."

Here my counsel rose, and said that he had conferred with his learned friends in the case as to the course he ought to pursue. He could not express the emotions which he felt at the exposures they had just witnessed; nor did he deem it necessary to say for himself and his brother-barristers, as well as for the respectable solicitors employed, that the revelations then made had come upon them entirely by surprise. Well weighing the responsible position they occupied towards the plaintiff, whose advocates they were, they still felt, after the appalling exhibition they had witnessed—an exposure unparalleled in a court of justice—it would be unbefitting their station as gentlemen, and unworthy of their duty as barristers, any longer to continue this contest.

A low murmur of approbation ran through the court as the words were concluded, and the Judge solemnly added, "You have shown a very wise discretion, sir, and which completely exonerates you from any foreknowledge of this fraud."

The defendant's counsel then requested that the Court would not permit the plaintiff to leave.

"We intend to prefer charges of forgery and perjury against him, my lord," said he; "and meanwhile I desire that the various documents we have seen may be impounded."

On an order from the Judge, the plaintiff was now taken into custody; and after, as it appeared, one or two vain efforts to address the Court, in which his voice utterly failed him, he was removed.

Mr. McClelland could not take his farewell of the case without expressing his full concurrence in the opinion expressed by the Court regarding his learned friends opposite, whose ability during the contest was only to be equalled by the integrity with which they guided their conduct, when defence had become worse than hopeless.

The defence of this remarkable suit will cost Mr. Curtis, it is said, upwards of seven thousand pounds.

A very few words will now complete this history. Let him who writes them be permitted to derive them from the public journals of the time, since it is no longer without deep humiliation he can venture to speak of himself. Alas, and alas! too true is it, the penalties of crime are as stigmatizing as crime itself! The stripes upon the back, the brand upon the brow,

are more enduring than the other memories of vice. Be innocent of all offence, appeal to your own heart with conscious rectitude, yet say if the chain has galled your ankle, and the iron bar has divided the sunlight that streamed into your cell—say, if you can, that self-esteem came out intact and unwounded, after such indignity.

I speak this with no malice to my fellow-men—I bear no grudge against those who sentenced me; too deeply conscious am I of my many offences against the world to assume even to myself the pretension of martyr; but I do assert, that vindication of character, restitution to fair fame, comes late, when once the terrible ordeal of public condemnation has been passed. The very pity men extend to you, humiliates—their compassion savours of mercy; and mercy is the attribute of One alone!

The *Morning Advertiser* informed its readers, amidst its paragraphs of events—"That, on Wednesday last, Paul Gervois, the celebrated claimant to the estates of the late Walter Carew, was forwarded to Cork, previous to embarking on board the transport ship *Craven Castle*, in pursuance of the sentence passed upon him last assizes, of banishment beyond the seas for the term of his natural life. The wretched man, who, since the discovery that marked the concluding scene of his trial, has scarcely uttered a word, declined all defence, and while obstinately rejecting any assistance from counsel, still persisted in pleading not guilty to the last.

"It is asserted, we know not with what authority, that the eminent leader of the Western Circuit is fully persuaded not only of Gervois' innocence, but actually of his right to the vast property to which he pretended to be the heir; and had it not been for a severe attack of gout, Mr. Hanchett would have defended him on his late trial."

Amidst the fashionable intelligence of the same day, we read that "a very large and brilliant company are passing the Easter holidays at the hospitable seat of Joseph Curtis, Castle Carew, amongst whom we recognized Lord and Lady Ogletown, Sir Massy Digby, the Right Hon. Francis Malone, Major-General Count Ysaffich, Knight of various orders, and Augustus Clifford, &c."

I was on board of a convict hulk in Cork harbour from March till the latter end of November, not knowing, nor indeed caring, why my sentence of transportation had not been carried out. The shock under which I had fallen still stunned me. Life was become a dreary, monotonous dream, but I had no wish to

awake from it; on the contrary, the only acute suffering I can trace to that period was, when the unhappy fate which attached to me excited sentiments of either compassion or curiosity in others. Prison discipline had not, at the time I speak of, received the development it has since attained; greater freedom of action was permitted to those in charge of prisoners, who, provided that their safety was assured, were suffered to treat them with any degree of severity or harshness that they fancied.

The extraordinary features of the trial in which I had figured—the “outrageous daring of my pretensions”—as the newspapers styled it—attracted towards me some of that half-morbid interest which, somehow, attaches to any remarkable crime. Scarcely a week passed without some visitor or other desiring to see me; and I was ordered to come up on deck, or to “walk aft on the poop,” to be stared at and surveyed, as though I had been some newly discovered animal of the woods.

These were very mortifying moments to me, and, as I well knew that their humiliation formed no part of my sentence, I felt disposed to rebel against this infliction. The resolution required more energy, however, than I possessed, nor was it till after long and painful endurance, that I resolved finally to resist. As I could not refuse to walk up on deck when ordered, the only resistance in my power was to maintain silence, and not reply to a single question of those whose vulgar and heartless curiosity prompted them to make an amusement of my suffering.

“The fellow won’t speak, gentlemen,” said the superintendent one morning to a very numerous party, who, in all the joyousness of life and liberty, came to heighten their zest for pleasure by the sight of sorrow and pain. “He was never very communicative about himself, but latterly he refuses to utter a word.”

“He still persists in asserting his innocence?” asked one of the strangers, but in a voice easily overheard by me.

“Not to any of us, sir,” replied the turnkey, gruffly; “he may do so with his fellows below in the hold, but he knows better than to try on that gammon with us.”

“I must say,” said one, in a half-whisper, “that, even in that dress, he has the look of a gentleman about him.”

“Good heavens!” exclaimed another, “if his story were to be true!”

I know not what chord in my heart responded to that sudden burst of feeling. I am fully convinced that, to anything like

systematic condolence or well-worded compassion, I should have been cold as a stone; and yet I burst into tears as he spoke, and sobbed convulsively.

"Ah! he's a deep one," muttered the turnkey. "Take him down with you, corporal;" and I was marched away, glad to hide my shame and my sorrow in secret.

Various drafts had been made of those who had been my companions, until at last not one remained of those originally sentenced at the same assizes with myself. What this might portend I knew not. Was I destined to end my days on board of this dark and dismal hulk?—was I never to press earth once more with my feet? How simply that sounds; but let me tell you, there is some strange, high instinct in the heart of man that attaches him to the very soil of earth. That clay of which we came, and to which we are one day to return, has a powerful hold upon our hearts. He who toils in it loves it with a fonder love than the great lord who owns it. Its varied aspects in sunshine and in shade, its changeful hues of season, its fragrance and its barrenness, are the books in which he reads; its years of fruitfulness are the joyous episodes of his existence. The mother earth is the parent that makes all men akin, and teaches us to love each other like brethren.

"Well, Gervois," said the turnkey to me one morning, "you are to go at last, they say. Old Hanchett has argued your case till there is no more to be said of it; but the Lords have decided against you, and now you are to sail with the next batch."

The announcement gave me neither pleasure nor pain; even this evidence of Hanchett's kindness towards me did not touch my feelings, for I had outlived every sentiment of regard or esteem, and lay cold and apathetic to whatever might betide me.

Possibly this indifference of mine might have piqued him, for he tried to stimulate me to some show of interest, or even of curiosity about my own case, by dropping hints of the points of law on which the appeal was grounded, and the ingenuity by which counsel endeavoured to rescue me. But all his efforts failed; I was dead to the past, and careless for the future.

"Here's another order come about you," said he to me about a week after this; "you are not to be shipped off next time. They've found something else in your case now, which, they say, will puzzle the twelve judges. Mayhap you'd like to read it, if I could get you the newspaper?"

"It were kinder to leave me as I am," replied I. "He who can only awake to sorrow had better be let sleep on."

"Just as you please, my man," rejoined he, gruffly;

"though, if I were you, I'd like to know that my case was not hopeless."

"You fancy that it matters to me whether my sentence be seven years or seventy; whether I be condemned to chains here, or hard labour there, or mere imprisonment without either; but I tell you that for the terms of the penalty I care almost nothing. The degradation of the felon absorbs all the rest. When the law has once separated from all save the guilty, it has done its worst."

This was the second attempt he made to stimulate my curiosity. His third venture was more successful.

"So, Gervois," said he, seating himself opposite me, "they're on the right scent at last in your business; they're likely to discover the real heir to that property you tried for."

"What do you mean?" asked I.

"Why, it seems somehow there is, or there ought to be somewhere, a young fellow, a son to this same Carew; and if what the newspapers here say be true, his right to the estate can be soon established."

I stared at him with amazement, and he went on.

"Listen to this:—'Our readers cannot fail to remember a very remarkable suit which lately occupied no small share of public attention, by the efforts of a fraudulent conspiracy to undermine the title of one of the largest landed proprietors in this kingdom. It would appear now that some very important discoveries have been made in America respecting this claim, particulars of which have been already forwarded to England. As the parties who have made these discoveries may soon be expected in this country, it is not impossible that we may soon hear of another action of ejectment, although on very different grounds, and with very different results from the late one.'"

A very few days after this there appeared another and still more remarkable paragraph, copied from the *London Chronicle*, which ran thus:—

"We mentioned a few days back, that an estate, the claim to which was the subject of a late most remarkable lawsuit, was likely again to furnish matter for the occupation of the gentlemen of the long robe. There would seem now to be no doubt upon the subject, as one of the most eminent solicitors in this country has received instructions to take the necessary steps, preliminary to a new action at law. The newly-discovered facts are sufficiently curious to deserve mention. The late Walter Carew, Esq., was reputed to have married a French

lady, who, although believed to have been of high and distinguished rank, was no longer traceable to any family, nor indeed to any locality in France. There were many mysterious circumstances attending this alleged union, which made the fact of a marriage very doubtful. Nothing certainly could be discovered amongst Carew's papers, or little to authenticate the circumstances, nor was there a single allusion to be found to it in his handwriting. A singular accident has at length brought this document to light; and although the individual whose fortune it most nearly concerned has ceased to exist—he died, it is believed, in the affair of the Sections at Paris—the result will, in all probability, affect the possession of the vast property in question.

“The discovery to which we allude is as follows:—A mass of papers and family documents were deposited by the late Duke of Montpensier in the hands of certain bankers in Philadelphia, in whose possession they have remained undisturbed and unexplored, up to within a few weeks back, when the Duke of Orleans, desiring to know if a particular document that he sought for was amongst the number addressed himself to the firm for this purpose. Whether success attended the search in question we know not, but it certainly elicited another and most curious discovery—no less than that the late Madame de Carew was a natural daughter of Philippe, Duke of Orleans, the celebrated ‘Egalité,’ and that her marriage had been the result of a wager lost by the Duke to Carew. We are not at liberty to divulge any more of the singular circumstances of this strange compact, though we may add, what in the present is the more important element of the case, no less than this marriage certificate of Walter Carew and Josephine de Courtois, forwarded to the Duke in a letter from the Duchesse de Sargance, who had accompanied them.

“The letter of the Duchess herself is not one of the least singular parts of this most strange history, since it mentions the marriage in a style of apology, and consoles the Duke for the *mésalliance* by the assurance that, probably, in the obscurity of Ireland, they will never more be heard of.

“Amongst the strange coincidences of this strange event, another still remains to be told. It was in the hands of the firm of Rogers and Raper that these documents were deposited, and Mr. Raper himself has passed half a lifetime in the vain search for the very piece of evidence which mere chance has thus presented to him.

“That Gervois, the celebrated impostor in this case, must

have, by some means or other, obtained an insight into the strange circumstances of this story, is quite evident, and we understand that the order for his departure has been countermanded till he be interrogated as to the amount of his knowledge, and the sources from which he derived it. Mr. Raper and the Countess of Gabriac, an Irish woman by birth, are expected daily to arrive in this country, and we may look forward to their coming for the elucidation of one of the most curious stories in our domestic annals.

"There is a story current that Lady Hester Stanhope remembers, some years back, a young man having presented himself to Mr. Pitt as the son of the late Walter Carew, and shown certain papers to authenticate his claim; and as the occurrence took place subsequent to the year '95, it is evident that if his pretensions were well founded, there could be no truth in the account of his having fallen in the 'Battle of the Sections.'"

I have no heart to speak of how these passages affected me. To hear that my dear mother and Raper still lived; that they not only remembered me, but that their deep devotion to my cause still animated them, was too much to bear! Bruised, and shattered, and broken down by fortune, this proof of affection kindled the almost dead embers of feeling within me, and I fell upon my knees in thankful prayer to Heaven that I was not deserted nor forgotten! It was no longer rank, and wealth, and riches that glittered before me. I sought for no splendours of fortune or high estate. All that I asked—all that I prayed for, was an honourable name before man, and that love which should once more reconcile me to myself—lift me from the lonely depths of my isolation, and make a home for me with those to whom I was dear.

"On deck, Gervois," said the turnkey, arousing me from a deep reverie a few days after this interview; "on deck—here are some strangers want to have a look at ye."

I slowly followed him up the ladder. I was weak and sickly, but no longer dispirited nor depressed; a faint flickering of hope now burned within me, and I felt that, even to the vulgar stare of curiosity, I could present the steady gaze of one whose vindication might one day be pronounced. I had but touched the deck with my foot, when I was clasped in a strong embrace, and Polly's voice, as she kissed me, cried, "My own dear, dear boy—my own long lost child."

Raper's arms were around me too, and another that I knew

not, a white-haired man, old and sorrow-stricken, but noble-looking, grasped my hand in his, and said,—

“His father, every inch of him!”

Poor MacNaghten! he had come from fourteen years of imprisonment to devote his first moment of liberty to bless and embrace me.

Oh! you who have known what it is to be rescued from death when every hope of life had left you—who have from the storm-tossed raft watched the sail as it came nearer and nearer, and at last heard the loud cheer that said, “Be of good courage—a moment more and we will be with you”—even you, in that moment of blissful agony, cannot sound the depth of emotion, which was mine, as, throwing off the stain of the felon, I stood forth in the pride of my guiltlessness, able to say to the world, see how you have wronged me! See how, confounding the weakness and the folly of the human heart with direct and actual criminality, you have suffered the probable or the possible to usurp the place of the inevitably true—have been so carried away by prejudice or by passion as to sentence an innocent man:—see, I say, that your judgments are fallible and your tests are weak; and bethink you that all you can do hereafter, in atonement of your error can never erase the deep welt of the fetter on his limb, or the more terrible brand that stamped guilty on his name. If you cannot be always just, be sometimes merciful; distrust, at least, the promptings that disposed you to condemn, and say to your heart, “Good God, if this man were to prove innocent!”

I am now wealthy and rich. Years of prosperity have rolled over me—years of tranquil happiness and sincere enjoyment. There is not a day on which I have not to thank Heaven for blessings of health and vigour—for the love of kind hearts, and for the affection of many benevolent natures. I know and I acknowledge that these are more than the recompense of any sorrows I have suffered; and in my daily walk of life I try to aid those who suffer—to console affliction, and to cheer weak-heartedness. The happiness that others seek and find within the circle of their own, I look for in the wider family of mankind, and I am not disappointed.

Polly and Raper live with me. MacNaghten, too, inhabits the old room that once was his. Poor fellow, in his extreme old age he loves every spot that revives a memory of the past, and in his wanderings often calls me “Walter.”

It remains for me but to say, that the singular events which ultimately restored me to my own, attracted the attention of

royalty. The various details which came out upon the trial, with the evidence given by the Countess of Gabriac and Raper—all of which, involving so much already known, I have spared the reader—so far interested the King, that he expressed a desire to see me at Court.

I hastened, of course, to obey the command, and from the royal hand received the honour of knighthood, his Majesty saying, "We should have made you a baronet, only that it would have been of no use to you, seeing that you are the last of the Carews, of Castle Carew."

Yes, kind reader, and these too, are our last words to you. Would that anything in these memorials of a life may have served to lighten a weary hour, or softened a moment of suffering, since to the higher purposes of instruction or improvement they lay no claim. At all events, think of me as one too deeply conscious of his own faults to hide or to extenuate them, and too sincerely sensible of his good fortune not to strive to extend its blessings to others.—Adieu.

THE END.

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